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MRS.

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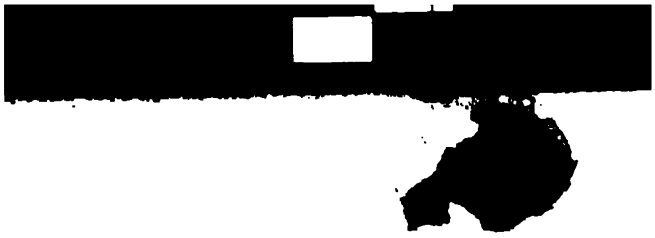

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OR

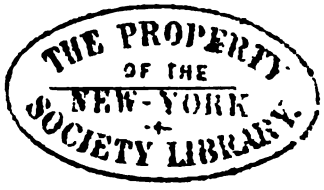
SISTER ANGELA

BY

MRS. GEORGIE SHELDON

AUTHOR OF

"HIS HEART'S QUEEN," "MAX," "THE FORSAKEN BRIDE," ETC., ETC.



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CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS APPLICANT.

ONE dismal day in November—a day when the sky was dull and leaden, when the wind sighed and moaned mournfully, and, a fine cold rain that was almost sleet was falling, a young girl, clad in a long, dark ulster, a brown felt hat upon her head, her face concealed by a thick veil, entered the reception office of the City Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts.

Going directly to the clerk, who sat within a little box-office, she asked:

"Can I see the superintendent?"

The woman eyed her curiously for a moment, then curtly replied:

"This isn't visitors' day, miss, and if you've come to see any friend, calling upon the superintendent won't do you any good, for we never break our rules."

"I have no friends here; I have not come to visit any one; I simply desire to see the superintendent upon a matter of business," the young girl quietly returned, but with a certain dignity which appeared to impress the clerk, for she at once rang the bell, and then bent again over the book in which she had been writing.

Presently a man appeared.

"What's wanted?" he briefly asked.

"Is the superintendent in his office?" the clerk inquired, without lifting her eyes from her book.

"Yes."

"Tell him there's a lady here who wishes to see him."

The man retreated after darting an inquisitive glance at the visitor, and was absent about five minutes, when he reappeared, and by a sign indicated that the girl was to follow him. Passing through a narrow hall, her guide at length opened a door on his left, and told his companion to enter.

"The superintendent's in his office with one of the directors, but he'll be out presently," he said, then vanished, closing the door after him.

The girl sat upon a chair near the window, turning her veil back from her face, a heavy sigh escaping her as she did so. The act disclosed a pale but strikingly beautiful countenance. The features were perfect, clear cut, and with the imprint of the patrician plainly stamped upon them.

The brow was rather low, but full and beautifully shaped and crowned by waving black hair, as fine and glossy as silk. A pair of great jet-black eyes were shaded by long curling lashes. The nose was small and straight, the cheeks delicately rounded, the mouth a marvel of loveliness and sweetness, while the prettily rounded chin had a charming little dimple at its base.

Her complexion was strangely fair for one who had such dark hair and eyes, and this fairness was enhanced by the vivid scarlet of her lips and the utter absence of color in her cheeks.

There was an expression of sadness in her eyes, and every now and then a quiver of pain swept over her red lips and found vent in a deep sigh, which plainly betrayed that she had some secret anxiety or trouble on her mind.

She was rather slightly formed and delicate in appearance, yet there was strength and vigor in her movements, despite the air of depression that pervaded her attitude.

Presently a door, opposite the one by which she had entered, opened, and a tall, rather awkward man came into the room.

He eyed his visitor with a keen glance, as he bowed

courteously to her, and then stood waiting for her to state her business.

She arose as he came forward, and, extending a slip of printed paper toward him, remarked: "I have come to you, sir, in reply to this advertisement for nurses."

The man regarded her with surprise.

Her every tone and word and gesture betrayed culture and refinement—that she had been delicately and even aristocratically reared, and although adverse circumstances might have driven her to the necessity of working for her own support, he wondered that she should have chosen the laborious avocation of a common nurse.

"Have you had any experience in nursing?" he inquired, as he took the slip from her and ran his eye over it.

"Yes, sir, although I have never been regularly trained. I had a—a friend"—her voice faltered slightly over the word—"who was an invalid for several years, and so I have had a great deal of experience in the sick-room."

"Hum—how old are you?" asked the superintendent, glancing sharply at the beautiful face of his companion, and thinking that she seemed very young for one who professed to know so much regarding the care of invalids.

A delicate flush arose for a moment to her cheek, as if she felt the touch of irony in his question; but she replied with the utmost self-possession:

"Twenty-one last month. I would like very much, sir, to become a trained nurse, and that is why I have applied to you to-day."

"You are slightly built—you do not look very strong, and I do not need to tell you that it takes a robust constitution to endure the hardships of nursing," the man returned, as he regarded her curiously.

The girl straightened her lithe form with a movement that was replete with energy.

"I know that I do not have the appearance of being very strong, but I am," she said positively. "I have had long and thorough training in physical culture—I continue the practice of the various exercises daily, and my muscles and sinews are strong and flexible as steel."

As she concluded, she threw out her right arm with a

movement which showed that there was great latent strength in it for one apparently so delicately built.

"You are quite pale, too—you do not look very well," continued her companion, without appearing to heed her statements.

"I am naturally pale—it is a complexion that I inherit; but I am never ill," she quietly responded.

The superintendent bent his head in thought a moment.

He knew that there was, in some instances, more endurance in persons of her physique than in those more robust, and that they frequently made better nurses.

He was greatly prepossessed by the quiet, self-contained manner of the girl, and a certain reserve force which had made itself apparent from the moment when she had first spoken, and he felt inclined to give her a trial.

"We are in great need of nurses at present," he said at length, "and I think I will take you on probation, as the Methodists say—that is, if you can come and begin your duties immediately."

"I can come at once—I can remain now if you like, since I am entirely at liberty, and I can send for my trunk by an express messenger," she answered with an undercurrent of eagerness that was somewhat at variance with her previous calmness and self-possession.

"Very well. I would like you to remain. Is your home—are your friends in this city?"

"No, sir," was the brief reply.

Again the man glanced sharply at her. A certain sadness that seemed to pervade her, together with the quiet dignity and self-possession of her bearing, somehow moved him strangely, while it was evident from the brevity of her last reply that she intended to guard her previous history from all inquisitiveness.

"Your name, if you please?" he asked, seating himself at his desk, and opening a book that lay upon it, although his eyes never left the applicant's fair face.

Again a slight flush leaped to her cheek at this question, and she hesitated an instant before replying; then she said, quietly:

"Salome Howland."

The superintendent wrote the name, together with her age in his register, though a queer little smile played over his lips the while; then, with his pen suspended over the next line, he continued:

"Your birthplace, if you please, and present place of residence?"

"I was born upon the Atlantic Ocean. My present place of residence is—Boston," she answered, without changing a muscle of her countenance.

Clearly she intended to keep her identity in as much obscurity as possible.

Again that peculiar smile curved her companion's lips, and it was with no little eagerness and curiosity that he put his next question, for he was becoming deeply interested in this fair stranger.

"You, of course, have the necessary references?" he observed, in a matter-of-fact tone. "All nurses who are admitted here are required to be well recommended."

A flash of color leaped to her brow, and he could see that her delicate under-lip quivered painfully, while there was a moment of ominous silence.

Then she turned and confronted him squarely, and lifted her beautiful face appealingly to him, meeting his glance with her great black eyes frankly and unflinchingly.

"That is the one weak point in my application, sir," she said. "I have no reference—no recommendation to give you. I am alone in the world, and friendless—obliged to provide for my daily necessities. I came to you from the death-bed of the only relative I had in the world." She caught her breath with a little sob at this, and the man's heart was touched, "and what I have told you about my abilities as a nurse is strictly true. My personal character, I assure you, is above criticism;" this with a proud uplifting of her small head that carried conviction with it, and proved to her companion that she was no ordinary person, and would scorn to do anything that would serve to lower her in the estimation of others, or the esteem of herself; "But," she added, "I have only my own word to prove all this to you, and if such

proof is necessary, I can only give it to you by my daily deportment, during my term of 'probation.'"

It was a little out of order for him to receive a nurse under such circumstances; but the more he saw of her the more interested he became, and his curiosity to see and know more was excited.

Then, too, there was a certain ward in the hospital that was sorely in need of nurses. He saw that she was intelligent, cool, and clear-headed, with more than ordinary reserve force and self-possession, and feeling confident that she was all she represented herself to be—though he had some doubt that she had given her real name—he determined to waive the strict letter of requirement, for once, and engage her without inquiry.

He completed the entry in his register, and then told her that she might consider herself as engaged for a month upon trial; after which she could be booked, if she gave satisfaction, as a regular nurse.

An expression of infinite relief swept over her face at this information—a look which seemed to betray a sense of rest and security, as if she suddenly felt that a safeguard from dreaded danger had been thrown around her.

Her magnificent eyes lighted; more of energy and animation than she had yet shown took possession of her, while the smile with which she thanked the superintendent revealed two rows of the whitest and most perfect teeth that he had ever seen.

"I hope she isn't a coquette," he mused with some anxiety, as he for the first time realized the full power of her beauty; "for if she is, she'll be turning the heads of the male nurses and young doctors, and make no end of mischief for us."

But it was too late to retract now, and after settling a few more preliminaries and assigning her to the ward wherein she was to serve, he rose and told her to follow.

He led her from the office building, through the spacious rounds of the hospital, to the main entrance, and thence to a ward in a large wing. Then calling the head nurse of that department, he introduced the novitiate and stated

that she was prepared to enter upon her duties immediately.

. . . . . .

Salome Howland's month of probation passed rapidly, and during that time she endeared herself to every one with whom she came in contact. The head nurse of the ward spoke in the highest praise of her. She had never before had any novice, she said, so efficient—no one so intelligent, or so thoroughly interested and enthusiastic in her work; while the patients whom she attended grew to love the very sound of her footstep. There was no one so gentle, so patient, and sympathetic as Miss Howland, they affirmed—no one who had so bright a smile, such cheery comforting words for those who were suffering and depressed; no one whose touch was so tender and soothing, whose voice was so musically modulated, whose steps were so light, whose service so willing.

"I am glad that you like her, and that she proves so efficient," the superintendent remarked when, at the end of the allotted month, he sought the head nurse to ascertain if she was giving satisfaction. "I should have been sorry to have sent her away, for she seemed anxious to become a trained nurse, and somehow I feel deeply interested in her."

"She is a treasure! She throws her whole heart and soul into her work; if it will only last," the head nurse added, with a sigh, as if she feared it would not.

"Do you think she is quite well? she looks so pale, while she is not nearly so robust as most of the nurses," the superintendent remarked, as his glance followed the movements of the girl, who in her pretty white cap and apron seemed even more dainty and delicate than when he had first seen her, in her felt hat and ulster, in his office.

She was moving lightly about the ward, with a free, elastic but noiseless step, distributing the flowers that were sent up every day from the conservatories for the patients, and he did not fail to notice how every face brightened at her approach, and how fondly the glance of every one lingered upon her; and surely, he thought, she was a goodly sight for any one to look upon.

"She seems to be perfectly well and strong," the nurse responded. "I am surprised at times to see how strong she is. She looks delicate, I admit; but her powers of endurance are wonderful, and she can manage with as little sleep as any one I ever saw. She is remarkably intelligent and practical too, both regarding her own health and the treatment of the patients. She obeys rigidly the rules for physical culture, is regular as a clock about taking her meals and her rest. Most of the nurses complain that they do not get sleep and rest enough, and are often dull and stupid upon being called to their duties. But Miss Howland is always bright and fresh as a daisy. She says it is because she never allows herself to talk or worry upon retiring, but wills herself to sleep immediately. I believe her only thought or aim is, how best to fit herself for her work, and I predict that she will make an invaluable nurse, if——"

"If what?" inquired the superintendent, with some curiosity, as the woman abruptly ceased.

"If some one doesn't find her out, marry her, and take her away from us," responded the nurse, somewhat shortly, adding, "She's far too bright and pretty, let alone her goodness, not to be appreciated and captured by somebody. The young doctors all make eyes at her, but she never sees them—or pretends she doesn't."

"Modest—eh!" laughed her companion, while he also might almost have been accused of "making eyes" at the pretty face that he was watching so intently.

"Yes, almost to prudishness; but wait—the right one will come along one of these days, then puff! away she'll go, like a bit of thistle-down upon the wings of the wind; it's the way with all such treasures!"

The superintendent gave vent to a little laugh of amusement at the woman's quaint prophecy.

"I am glad you like her so well," he said, and then went his way to other duties, while Salome Howland was, for the time at least, forgotten.

CHAPTER II.

A NARROW ESCAPE AND A WONDERFUL EXPERIMENT.

IT was the third day of January. A fearful storm had been raging for two days, and now the weather was growing intensely cold.

It was late in the evening when a young man arrived at an hotel in Boston, and registered as Truman H. Winthrop, M.D., New York city.

He was apparently twenty-five years of age, a tall, massively formed fellow, yet so finely proportioned that he did not really seem so powerful as he was. A fine brow surmounted by a wealth of curling brown hair crowned a keen, clear-cut, and intelligent face. A pair of deep blue eyes gleamed with a kindly light, yet seemed to take in, with swift comprehensive glances, everything going on around him; while about the sensitive mouth there lingered an expression of sweetness, which betokened a tender heart and warm sympathies, though the somewhat heavy chin betrayed an undercurrent of great strength and firmness of character.

"Can you give me a comfortable room," he inquired of the clerk, after he had entered his name upon the hotel register.

"We are very full to-night," was the answer, "and the best that I can do for you will be to give you a room on the third floor over the hall."

"Hum," mused the young physician, with a somewhat disappointed look on his fine face. "How is it heated?" he asked, after a moment of thought.

"By a stove. It was originally used as a storeroom, and steam was not carried into it when we refitted the hotel," replied the clerk.

"Well, if that is the best that you can give me, I

shall be obliged to put up with it for one night, as the storm is too severe for me to go out to hunt up another," the stranger returned with an air of resignation.

"I can do better to-morrow, perhaps, as some of our guests may be leaving," said the clerk.

"All right, you may order a fire to be lighted at once, so that my room will be warm by the time I am through supper," responded the young physician, and then he turned to follow a servant to the dining-room.

Half an hour later he retired to his room and to bed, having first given orders to be called at eight o'clock the next morning.

"Make sure that I am awake," he said to the call-boy, as he went upstairs, "for I have an important engagement at nine."

It was well for him that he gave this order, or he would never have opened his eyes in this world again.

Promptly at eight the next morning the boy rapped upon the door.

There was no response.

Again he knocked, and more vigorously.

Still no answer from within.

"Hallo there!" he cried, at the same time using his knuckles with redoubled energy. "Wake up, can't you?"

But the occupant of the little room over the hall was either a very heavy sleeper, or something was wrong with him.

The man put his ear to the keyhole, and could plainly detect the sound of heavy breathing.

"Something is amiss; nobody could remain in any natural sleep during such a racket as I've made," muttered the man, an anxious look coming into his face.

He hastened below, and reported to the clerk, and together they hurried back to the physician's room and tried a second time to arouse him.

It was in vain, however; there was not the slightest movement within, although they could plainly detect the heavy breathing of the man.

"He's in a fit of some kind, and we shall have to force the lock or break the door," said the clerk.

Both men put their shoulders against it and used all their strength for this purpose; but in vain, for the door was stronger than they.

A step-ladder was then brought, and a boy with a rope around his body was sent up to remove the transom, then told to crawl through, when they would let him down inside the room to unlock the door.

This was soon accomplished, and the moment the clerk stepped inside the door he comprehended the situation.

The room was full of coal gas.

The man upon the bed was asphyxiated.

Every window in the room was closed, and the damper in the stove-pipe had, by either the force of a strong draught or a sudden gust of wind, been shut, and thus the fumes from the burning coal had been thrown into the room.

The young doctor lay flat upon his back, breathing stertorously, while his face was ghastly, his skin clammy, and his pulse alarmingly feeble.

By this time quite an excitement prevailed on that floor of the hotel, and a crowd of curious and awe-stricken people had gathered about, the proprietor among them.

"A doctor—is there a doctor in the house?" cried some one who had not been quite so fully paralyzed by the appalling discovery as the others.

This aroused the proprietor to a sense of his duty.

"No, there is none," he said, "and none nearer than — street, that I know of. But," a bright idea suddenly occurring to him, "the City Hospital is near by; it'll take no longer to get him there than to get a physician here, and they have every facility there for every kind of treatment."

This plan seemed the most feasible of any, and accordingly the young doctor was warmly wrapped in blankets, a carriage hastily summoned, and both the proprietor and his clerk accompanied him to the hospital.

Immediately on their arrival, the most energetic measures were adopted for the man's recovery, although the attending physicians looked grave and doubtful as they remarked the failing condition of their patient.

They gave him hypodermic injections of ether and brandy, besides administering other remedies. His stomach was emptied of its contents, and then a tube, connected with a great jar of oxygen, was inserted in his mouth, so that he could breath pure oxygen instead of air.

But all these efforts proved unavailing, and the doctors then held a hurried consultation as to whether it would be wise and best to try, as a last resort, the transfusion of blood.

"He cannot live as he is—it is his only chance, and it is worth trying—if we can find any one who is willing to give up blood enough to save him," the head physician remarked, as he regarded with a sorrowful glance the splendid physique and intellectual face of the man before him.

He wanted to save his life, and he would gladly have given all that was necessary of his own blood, but he knew that he alone could perform that delicate and difficult operation successfully.

Then they began a hunt for some strong, well person among the nurses, who would sacrifice some of his life-current.

But it seemed likely to prove a fruitless search, as no one appeared willing to submit to the experiment of having his veins opened for the benefit of another.

One man sullenly muttered that he "hadn't any more blood than he needed himself." Others stared vacantly at the doctor, then shook their heads, turned on their heels and walked away, and it seemed as if the undertaking must be relinquished and the patient left to die; he seemed very near death now, for every time he drew in a breath of oxygen his body shook like a leaf.

"What shall we do? I cannot let him die," the physician cried in an agony of anxiety, for every moment was precious.

He turned away in disgust from the strong men who had refused his appeal, walked to the door and looked out into the long corridor.

No one was in sight, but the next moment a light step

in the distance warned him that some one was approaching, and then one of the nurses from the women's department came tripping around the corner from another hall.

"Ah, Dr. Hunt!" she exclaimed, as she caught sight of him, ""I was just seeking you—the head nurse in ward twelve wants you to come there immediately—a new and critical case has just arrived."

"I cannot go at present," the physician answered. "I am in the greatest extremity myself, just now, over a case of life or death, and only for the want of a little pure blood which no one will give."

Salome Howland, for she was the nurse, was all interest at once, and, lifting her eager, earnest face to his, asked:

"What is it—tell me, please?"

She was a favorite with Dr. Hunt, and he explained the case to her.

"He's a magnificent fellow, and it is the greatest pity in the world to let him die, without giving him this chance," he said in conclusion.

"And isn't there anybody who will make so simple a sacrifice for him?" the girl inquired, a curl of scorn wreathing her lips.

"No. I can't find a man among all the nurses who has courage enough to let me open a vein. I'd give my own blood gladly, only there is no one else who can conduct the operation. Heavens! I am getting desperate enough to gag and bind some one and forcibly take his blood," Dr. Hunt concluded, as he gnawed his under lip savagely.

There was a moment of silence; then the fair girl before him said, quietly:

"Dr. Hunt, I will give this young man a chance for his life—you shall take from my veins all the blood that you need."

The physician started and regarded her with astonishment. He had not thought of calling upon a woman for his experiment.

"Child!" he cried, "do you mean it?"

"I certainly do, doctor."

"But," scanning her face critically, "you do not look as if you had any blood to spare."

"Why—because I am pale?" she asked, then added: "That is natural to me, as you ought to know by this time, though, perhaps, the excitement of the moment has intensified my paleness a trifle. But I am well and strong, and I know my blood is pure. I have never been ill. I have no taint of disease about me. I have perfect confidence in you, Dr. Hunt, and I know that if I am well cared for afterward my veins will soon be so replenished as to make up for the blood that you take from me. Do not hesitate—do not waste precious time, but save this man's life if you can," she concluded, with an earnestness, yet with a calmness which won both his gratitude and admiration.

He laid his fingers upon her pulse.

It beat full and strong beneath them, with the flowing of the pure vigorous current of her life.

"You are a noble girl!" he cried, as he ushered her into the room from which he had but just come. "There is the man who needs your blood!"

Dr. Hunt immediately dispatched a runner to tell the head nurse of the ward Salome served in that he required her services for the present, and her place must be filled by another.

Then he hastened the preparations for his vital experiment.

A second cot was moved close beside the one on which the young physician lay, and a tall screen drawn around them, while all other necessary appliances were hastily arranged.

Salome was then led forward to the patient.

The girl gazed upon him for a moment, taking in at a glance his grand physique, his noble head and fine face, and a faint flush stole into her cream-like cheeks.

"Oh, he must not die!" she cried in a low, intense tone, as she lifted a pair of appealing eyes to the head physician. "Save him—save him, and be quick, Dr. Hunt, or it may be too late!"

Then, without a thought of self, she lay down upon the cot prepared for her, and allowed her sleeve to be cut from her dress, and her arm to be tightly bandaged about the fleshy portion, even assisting in these operations herself, without a tremor of fear or dread.

The arm of Dr. Winthrop was prepared in the same way; then a hypodermic injection of cocaine was administered to Salome, to deaden the pain, and all was ready for the final act.

With a firm and skilful hand, Dr. Hunt made an opening about two inches in length in Dr. Winthrop's right arm, on the outside, just at the bevel in the elbow. He cut away until he freed the median cephalic vein from the surrounding tissues, after which he treated Salome's left arm in the same manner.

Then taking a long rubber tube, with a bulb in the centre and a sharp-pointed steel tube at each end, he connected the life-currents of those two human beings lying side by side.

Successive compressions pumped the blood of the brave girl into the veins of the strong but helpless man, and she never flinched or moved once during the operation.

She lay with her eyes fixed in an anxious, eager look upon that ghastly face opposite her, as if her whole soul was concentrated upon the one thought of giving him life.

When some ten or twelve ounces of blood had been infused into the patient, a change began to be perceptible in him; his pulse grew stronger, and he partly regained consciousness.

The physician then withdrew the tubes, tied the veins, and sewed up the wounds in the two arms; but before this work was finished the heroic nurse had fainted from loss of blood and excitement, while it became evident that the young doctor was steadily improving, and stimulants, mixed with strong beef-tea, were frequently administered to him.

With tears in his eyes, Dr. Hunt himself gathered Salome in his arms, laid her upon a stretcher, and had her carried to one of the best private rooms in the hospital, where, after restoring her to consciousness, he gave

her temporarily into the hands of another physician and a competent nurse, while he went back to his other patient.

It was evident that the experiment was destined to prove a success, for he found the young man breathing naturally and conscious, although he could not yet speak.

They continued to give him nourishment and stimulants at frequent intervals throughout the day, and by evening he was much improved, although still weak and languid from the terrible ordeal through which he had passed.

He was able to converse a little with Dr. Hunt, who had worked so faithfully to save him, when he made his last round for the night. He told him that he was a physician from New York city, and had come to Boston at the invitation of a brother physician, to visit the various hospitals of the city, and they had planned to come that very day to the institution where he was now a patient.

He said that he feared his friend must be suffering great anxiety upon his account, as he had agreed to meet him at his office at nine o'clock that morning, and he would not know where to look for him, as he had sent him no word at what hotel he would stop.

Dr. Hunt, appreciating the situation, at once dispatched a messenger to Dr. Cutler, who came early the next morning to the sick man.

But though Dr. Winthrop steadily improved, he was not able to leave his bed for several days; his system had been so poisoned by the noxious gas that it took time to eradicate it.

Meantime, he inquired and learned all about the circumstances attending his critical condition and his almost marvellous restoration.

"That noble girl!" he had exclaimed, upon being told how willingly, even eagerly, Salome Howland had given up her life-blood for him. "She will have my everlasting gratitude. Who is she, and where can I find her when I am able to get away from here?"

"She is one of our nurses," Dr. Hunt replied, "a young

woman of remarkable nerve and strength of character, and eminently fitted for the life she has chosen."

From this brief description, Dr. Winthrop gained the impression that Salome might have been some strong-minded, rather masculine woman, of perhaps twenty-five or thirty years, with a heart and brain entirely devoted to the study and practice of her profession.

He meant to see her as soon as he was able to leave his room, express his hearty gratitude for the priceless boon she had bestowed upon him, and assure her of his readiness to befriend her or hers to the extent of his power, if she should ever require the services of a friend.

How soon and how strangely such a requirement would be forced on him, he did not dream, neither could he have any suspicion how vitally these incidents were to affect his whole future life.

CHAPTER III.

DR. WINTHROP BECOMES ACQUAINTED WITH SALOME.

MEANTIME, how fared it with the heroic young nurse, who had so trustfully surrendered herself into the hands of Dr. Hunt, and sacrificed so much to save the life of another?

Pale as a snow-flake, and weak as an infant from the loss of blood, of which the physician, in his eagerness to make sure of the life he was trying to save, had taken a more generous supply than was perhaps wise—she lay in a large sunny room, tenderly cared for by an efficient nurse, and closely and anxiously watched by Dr. Hunt.

She did not rally as rapidly as he had hoped and expected; her blood did not make as fast as it ought to have done, under the nourishing diet and judicious treatment that she was receiving, and the good man was greatly troubled as well as puzzled.

It pained him deeply, and kept him wretchedly anxious to see her lying there day after day so languid and weak; so spiritless and nerveless—all her natural energy and vigor apparently exhausted.

"What am I going to do with you, my girl, if you do not hurry up and get back your strength?" Dr. Hunt asked her one morning, with an assumed playfulness which he was far from feeling, and experiencing something very like a sense of guilt beneath the heavy glance of Salome's great eyes. "I can hardly forgive myself for having robbed you of your strength."

"Pray, do not regret your experiment, since it has proved such a success," the young girl began.

"I shall not account it a success if it should result in prolonged injury to you," he interrupted gravely.

"Oh, it will not," she answered, trying to speak reas-

suringly; "I shall soon be better. I do not suffer; I am only a little weak. But how is he—your patient—to-day?" she added, drooping her heavily fringed lids, while she nervously toyed with her handkerchief.

"He is doing excellently," Dr. Hunt answered with animation, for he had been jubilant over the success of his experiment. "So well," he added, "that he is going to leave the hospital to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" breathed Salome, in a startled tone, a faint flush leaping to her waxen cheek, while her heart began to flutter strangely.

"Yes; it is ten days since he began to rally, and he has improved very rapidly; but I am afraid he has drawn heavily upon your vitality, my child," the physician concluded with a sigh.

Salome smiled slightly; for she realized, if Dr. Hunt did not, something of the secret of her present weakness; for while she lay upon that other cot beside that noble-looking man, her whole soul had been concentrated upon the one thought of giving him life.

"Take the best, the very best that I can give—only let him live!" had been her continuous prayer as she watched every compression of the bulb which had served to pump her life-current into his veins, until it had seemed to her as if she had literally willed and infused her strength and vigor into him.

"Never mind," she said, with a quick upward glance, in which he seemed to read a gleam of exultation, "it will soon come again, and—I am very glad."

There was so much of self-abnegation in what she said, that Dr. Hunt felt a suspicious moisture filling his eyes.

"You are the noblest girl I ever knew," he said, with evident emotion. Then he added, with an effort at self-control: "But Dr. Winthrop begs the favor of an interview with you that he may personally express his gratitude for the inestimable gift you have bestowed upon him. I was commissioned to ask if you would receive him to-day—that is, if you feel able. Or," as he studied her downcast face critically, "shall I tell him to wait until you are stronger?"

He was at a loss how to explain her case; he could not understand it; it baffled him.

He reasoned that, strong and vigorous as her constitution naturally was, she should have rallied at once; that a couple of weeks, at the most, should have served to put her where she was before. But nearly two weeks had already elapsed, and she had scarcely strength to turn on her pillow, while, strangest of all, she expressed no anxiety or impatience to get well and go about her duties again.

Could he have read her heart, he would have been puzzled no longer. Could he have known that from the moment when he had led her to the young physician's side, when she had looked into his face, and realized at a glance the kind of man he was—could he have known that as he was pumping the blood from her veins into his, all the finest and tenderest sensibilities of her nature were being absorbed in him, that henceforth she would feel herself a part of him, that life away from him would never hold any charm for her—he might not have wondered at her present condition; it would have explained everything to him, and then, perhaps, he might have felt that he was responsible for a broken heart as well as an impaired constitution.

Strange as this may seem in a girl of such mental strength as Salome Howland, it was nevertheless true.

She realized that she was no longer her own, that she had given herself with her life-blood to another, and that other a stranger whom she had seen but once, whom perhaps she might never see again, who—dreadful thought! —for aught she knew might already be the husband of another.

She felt shamed, humiliated, terrified, when she awoke to a consciousness of such sentiments as these. Shamed and humiliated, because she had been so weak as to give her love unsought, and found that she had no power to rise above it; terrified because of the miserable blank that seemed to lie before her, if this man were destined to vanish as suddenly out of her life as he had come into it. How could she live with the mainspring of life—love—thus rudely wrenched out of her being forever?

This was why she had no incentive, no real desire to recover—why the duties which hitherto had been the chief object of her life had suddenly lost their charm and interest.

This, too, was why, when Dr. Hunt told her that Dr. Winthrop desired an interview, she was oppressed by a sudden sense of guilt, which caused her head to droop and the conscious color to leap to her very brow in a hot crimson tide.

Her judgment told her that it would be better to deny him the interview, for to see him again would only serve to intensify the sudden and, as she believed, hopeless passion that had taken possession of her.

Yet, in opposition to this, a feeling of ecstasy thrilled her at the thought of being again in his presence—his living, conscious presence; of meeting the glance of his eyes—brown, black, or blue, she knew not which; or hearing the tones of his voice and, perchance, feeling the touch of his hand—that hand which, but for her, would now have been cold and rigid in death.

"Only for once," she told herself. Just once she would see him and listen to his voice, and then she would hide the memory of it in the depths of her heart to live upon during all the lonely future which must now lie before her.

"Yes, I will see him to-day," she said to Dr. Hunt, with a little quiver of her delicate lips; "only please ask him not to speak of—gratitude."

"Of course he will speak of gratitude, dear child," returned the physician. "Pray do not deny him that slight return when you have given him the most precious boon this side of heaven, and at such a sacrifice, too."

Salome flushed again, but of course she could not argue the question further, and Dr. Hunt remarked, as he turned to leave the room:

"You may look for a call from my other patient between two and three this afternoon."

All day, after that, the nurse who cared for her wondered if it was simply excitement that caused that delicate sea-shell pink to linger in the cheeks of the fair invalid

and her eyes to gleam with a light such as she had never seen in them before.

At half-past two there came a tap on Salome's door, and the next moment Dr. Hunt, followed by Dr. Winthrop, entered the room.

The physician led his companion directly to his patient, saying in his frank, hearty fashion:

"This, my young friend, is the noble girl who rendered you such valuable service a while ago. Miss Howland, allow me to introduce Dr. Winthrop to you."

A queer little smile wreathed Dr. Hunt's lips as he performed this ceromony, while his kind eyes rested admiringly upon the fair invalid before him.

Hitherto, he had seen Salome in her plain dark dress only, with her nurse's cap and apron, and he had thought her very attractive in that simple garb; but now she appeared strikingly beautiful, despite her pallor and loss of flesh.

In anticipation of the call, the young girl had sent her nurse to her room, to bring a pretty crimson cashmere wrapper, which had lain unused in her trunk ever since her admission to the hospital.

It was beautifully made and richly trimmed with quilted satin of the same shade, and there were full ruchings at the throat and wrists of finest Valenciennes lace. The dress was extremely becoming to her complexion, with her dark hair and eyes, and she certainly was a lovely vision, with the delicate flush still on her cheeks and that gleam of light in her eyes.

"There is certainly some mystery about this girl," said Dr. Hunt to himself. "She was never intended for a nurse in a common hospital, in spite of her peculiar adaptation to such work; there is some peculiar reason for her being here, or I am greatly mistaken. I'd wager a round sum that she belongs, or has belonged, to some wealthy and aristocratic family."

"What a perfectly lovely girl!" was Dr. Winthrop's mental observation, as he went forward and bent over and clasped Salome's white hand, a thrill of reverence and gratitude stirring his heart.

She raised her eyes to his as she greeted him, and looking into those deep blue orbs, so kind, so frank, so genial, she read there something of the man's nobility of soul, something of his grand and lofty character, and a feeling of exultation took possession of her.

"My blood flows in his veins—my life mingles with his! I have saved this man from death!" was the glad thought that leaped to her brain, sending a deeper flush to her cheeks, a brighter light into her expressive eyes. Was there some peculiar magnetism in the mutual clasp of their hands?

There might or might not have been— no one can tell; but the fact remains that during that brief interval, in that simple touch, in that one swift glance, soul met soul, heart spoke to heart, and each was conscious that a vital change had suddenly come over their lives; that the hitherto quiet and undisturbed pool in the depths of their nature had been agitated by some unseen spirit, and the ripples widening into ever-increasing circles would influence all their future.

Was it the magnetism—the spirit of love?

All this was concentrated into a moment of time; the next Salome's eyes drooped beneath the earnest, admiring look of her companion, and the color mounted to her temples.

The young man noticed her embarrassment and gently released her hand, which he found himself holding in a closer clasp than was warrantable in a total stranger.

"Miss Howland," he said, in tones that trembled with emotion, "I am deeply moved by this meeting and all the thoughts it arouses, and I find myself tongue-tied before you, when I should be eloquent from gratitude and admiration.

"Pray, do not magnify a simple duty," Salome began, lifting an appealing glance to him.

"A simple duty!" he repeated, interrupting her. "It was a priceless gift that you bestowed upon me—I feel it a debt that I can never repay."

"Do not say that," she returned, looking slightly troubled. Then she added with a smile and a glance that

made his heart leap, "a free gift can never become a debt, so please do not be longer burdened, Dr. Winthrop."

"Heaven bless you, Miss Howland," the young man said, leaning toward her, and speaking with evident effort. "I see that you are sensitive upon the subject of my obligation," he added, "but just let me tell you that henceforth my life will be doubly precious, since something of the life of so noble a woman is mingled with it, and I shall treasure the memory of your lofty deed as the most sacred of all memories. Now tell me that you are really better to-day, for if my strength has been restored at the permanent sacrifice of yours I fear it will be a perpetual burden upon my conscience."

"Yes, I am better," Salome answered brightly. "Truly, I feel stronger this afternoon. If," with a shy smile and a saucy little nod at the elder physician "if Dr. Hunt would not make quite such a baby of me, I believe I should get about my duties more quickly."

"Baby, indeed!" retorted the good doctor, "when people have only the pulse of a baby they must be treated accordingly; eh, Winthrop?"

He came forward as he spoke and laid his skilled fingers upon her wrist.

But it was no baby's pulse that he counted then!

Her blood was rushing at a race-horse speed through her veins, and the man regarded her with a curious glance, while he marvelled at her almost bewildering beauty, heightened as it was by the brilliant flush on her cheeks and the light in her eyes.

"I trust that Miss Howland will be patient and allow herself to be properly cared for until she entirely recovers her strength," Dr. Winthrop gravely remarked, while his glance lingered wistfully upon her face.

"We shall have her in a fever if we subject her to too much excitement," Dr. Hunt remarked, with his fingers still upon her bounding pulse, "so, Winthrop, if you please, we will not prolong our call to-day."

The young physician arose at once.

"I hope we have not already taxed your strength too much by this interview, Miss Howland?" he said regret-

fully. "I shall be in Boston for two or three weeks longer, and, if you will allow me—if I shall not intrude, it would give me pleasure to call upon you again and see for myself how you are. Believe me, I shall not know a moment's peace until you are entirely recovered."

"You are very kind, Dr. Winthrop," Salome responded, with downcast eyes and a rapidly beating heart, "and I shall be glad to see you if you care to come again."

"Thank you," he heartily returned; then, after a hand-clasp in farewell, he followed Dr. Hunt from the room.

"What an exquisitely beautiful girl!" he exclaimed, as they passed down the long corridor together, "she is an entirely different person from what I imagined from your description of her."

"Hum! I didn't know she was quite so pretty myself until to-day," said Dr. Hunt reflectively. "I've never seen her in anything but the hospital uniform before—perhaps that's the reason."

"Is she obliged to make nursing her business?" inquired the younger man.

"I suppose so; at least, I imagine she is obliged to do something for her own support, and perhaps, having a love for this profession, she chose it in preference to anything else."

Dr. Winthrop looked thoughtful, but did not speak again until they reached Dr. Hunt's office, when he took leave of him, and departed to meet his friend, Dr. Cutler, and begin his tour of investigation in the different institutions of the city.

Two days later he made another call upon Salome, and thought her somewhat better.

He chatted nearly an hour, and was surprised to find her as cultivated mentally as she was beautiful personally.

He took pains to draw her out, and Salome, delighted to find her companion so genial and interesting, forgot herself and was really charming.

"She is far too lovely to bury herself in a sick-room—nursing is too hard, too thankless a task for one so gifted, mentally and physically, as she," the young man mused as he left her.

The next morning a basket of luscious fruit and a great cluster of Maréchal Niel roses found their way to Salome's room, and in the midst of the latter, she discovered a card bearing the name of "T. H. Winthrop, M.D."

She seemed greatly changed from the sad-eyed, grave-faced girl who had applied for entrance to the hospital as a nurse on that dismal November day. She was brighter and more animated in her manner; there was always a happy smile on her lips, a brilliant, almost joyous light in her eyes, and yet she did not seem to gain strength. The slightest exertion set her panting like a frightened hare. If she attempted to walk from her bed to her chair she would be exhausted, almost fainting from the effort, and Dr. Hunt was greatly exercised over her peculiar symptoms.

"If this experiment of mine should develop an affection of the heart, I should find it hard to forgive myself for having taken her blood," he muttered one day on leaving her, after imagining that he had detected signs of such a disorder.

Dr. Winthrop went almost every day to see her, and always with some dainty offering of fruit or flowers, or perchance some entertaining book or periodical—these latter were often productive of an interesting discussion—and when he was unable to pay his usual call, he sent some reminder of himself.

Salome was very generous with these gifts, and shared them with many a suffering patient, but she was never without some bud or spray of these precious mementos in her hands or on her breast, while every day she became more and more conscious that she was growing to love the giver even to the verge of idolatry.

She would not, however, allow herself to analyze her feelings, though she was now and then smitten with a consciousness of approaching sorrow or danger. She simply lived from day to day in the joyful expectation of his coming, and the delight of his presence, without questioning the wisdom of thus bestowing the wealth of her love upon him, or what life would be to her when he should return to his home and practice in New York.

One day he told her that he was to spend the whole of the coming week in that hospital, to witness two or three critical operations and their subsequent treatment.

Salome's heart leaped with sudden joy.

For a whole week she was to live beneath the same roof with him, and see him every day, perhaps oftener.

The rich color surged up over her face, and her lips quivered in a tender smile.

"After that," added Dr. Winthrop with an unconscious sigh, "I must go home to my duties."

A sudden blindness, a sense of dizziness, rushed over her as she realized what his departure would mean to her. For the first time she fully comprehended how blank, how devoid of all that could make life desirable to her the world would be when he should be gone. A deadly paleness overspread her features, she gasped once or twice, and then sank quietly back in her chair, where she lay without life or motion, like some beautiful spirit from another world.

CHAPTER IV.

DR. WINTHROP MAKES A STARTLING PROPOSAL.

DR. WINTHROP had not been looking at Salome when he made the announcement of his contemplated departure. He was gazing out of the window beside which he sat, at some of the patients who were strolling in the park—for the day was very mild, almost spring-like, and those who were well enough had been allowed to go out to take the air—and he had not a suspicion of the effect which his words had produced.

After a moment or two, however, not receiving any reply, and the silence becoming oppressive, he turned to glance at Salome, and was dismayed to find her unconscious.

He sprang to her side, gathered her in his arms, and laid her upon the bed, and fortunately at that moment Dr. Hunt entered the room.

"What is the matter here?" he sharply demanded, a look of concern on his honest face.

Dr. Winthrop, all unconscious that the announcement of his approaching departure had caused the swoon, explained that he had turned to the window to watch the patients in the park, and when he looked back again he found Miss Howland unconscious.

"I am afraid there is something very serious the trouble with Miss Howland," he added, with a very grave face. "I have been watching her very closely of late, and I have begun to fear atrophy of the heart, superinduced by the loss of blood."

"You are right. I have feared the same myself, yet I was as sparing as I dared to be and make sure of your life," Dr. Hunt replied, with a regretful look into Salome's white face. "But," he added, "unless this trouble, that

has recently shown itself is arrested at once, I can only predict the worse."

Dr. Winthrop looked deeply distressed.

"And I am accountable for it," he said, in a pained tone.

"Tut—tut! You are no more accountable for it than I am—nor so much, perhaps," responded the physician somewhat sharply, for he keenly felt the responsibility of having consented to accept Salome's generous sacrifice in that critical experiment.

"She would tell you," he went on, "that no one but herself should be blamed—we did what we thought was best, time was precious, and a longer delay would have been fatal to you; but, Heaven willing, I hope she may be saved even yet. I only wish she had a happy home in this city. She needs constant watching and diversion without excitement, as well as the kind and loving attention of friends."

"She will have to give up her profession as a nurse—she will not be strong enough for such a life," Dr. Winthrop remarked thoughtfully.

"No, at least, not for some time to come; and a great pity it is, too, for a more faithful, conscientious little nurse I never saw," Dr. Hunt responded, as he administered a second potion to revive the unconscious girl and anxiously watched for its effect.

"Where are her friends?" Dr. Winthrop inquired.

"I don't know—I doubt if she has any; but, hush! she is reviving," was the swift, subdued reply, as Salome slowly unclosed her eyes and heaved a deep sigh.

Something of this, however, Salome had heard, indistinctly or as if she had been in a dream; but the meaning of it came to her gradually afterward, when she was able to think over what had occurred, and it filled her with dismay.

Atrophy of the heart.

She was familiar enough with medical terms to understand what Dr. Winthrop meant, and she knew, also, that there would be no more nursing for her at present, if indeed ever, if their fears should be verified.

Must she surrender all her hopes—all her plans? Must she go away from the seclusion of her present retreat—out again into the world from which she had been hiding, away from that haven of safety where she had felt so content, so sure that no one could find her, and where she had begun to feel that she was doing so much good?

What could she do? Whither could she turn without a home, or friends to give her the care which she needed?

"Oh! my future will be desolate indeed if I cannot work—if I cannot have any object in life—more desolate than ever, now that my path has crossed his. How can I bear it?" she moaned, when the next day after her attack, she was trying to think of a way out of the slough in which she had suddenly found herself sinking. Weakened by her illness, she had not the self-control which she usually possessed, and sobs broke from her pale lips—tears streamed over her wan cheeks.

In the midst of this emotion her nurse opened the door and announced:

"Dr. Winthrop, miss."

Before she could wipe her tears or check her sobs, he had entered and she could not conceal her grief.

He came toward her, deep concern written upon his face, while the nurse, glad to be relieved, slipped away again.

"Miss Howland!" he exclaimed, "are you in trouble? Am I intruding? Shall I go away?"

She looked up at him and tried to smile, as she hastily brushed the bright drops from her cheeks.

"No, do not go," she said; "perhaps I am nervous, and need cheerful company to help me forget myself."

He brought a chair and sat beside her, a sudden determination seizing him to know the cause of her tears.

He laid his usual offering upon her lap as he seated himself—a dainty bouquet of lilies of the valley.

"Oh, how lovely!" she cried, and her face brightened instantly; "they are so sweet!"

"Yes, they signify 'unconscious sweetness,' and are like some people whom I know," said the young man significantly. "And now, Miss Howland," he continued

in a tone of gentle authority, "tell me why I find you so depressed—what is it that troubles you?"

Salome met his glance with grave, sad eyes, her brightness all vanishing, and said frankly:

"I was not wholly unconscious yesterday, Dr. Winthrop. I heard what you and Dr. Hunt said, regarding my condition, and I have studied *materia medica* enough to know what atrophy of the heart means."

"Did you hear our conversation?" cried Dr. Winthrop regretfully. "And yet," he added, "I do not know but it is better, on the whole, that you should be warned in season. Give up your work and return to your friends to be cared for. Where is your home, Miss Howland?"

Salome's white face flushed for an instant, and then grew paler than before.

"I—have no home, Dr. Winthrop. I have no friends," she replied, after a moment of hesitation. "And," she continued, her now pallid lips quivering painfully, "if I have atrophy of the heart, and can never work any more, I—am—ready—to die. I hope I may die soon."

"Oh, no, you must not die—it is not so bad as that—you shall not die!" the young physician cried, startled out of his usual self-possession by her hopeless words, while a spasm of pain contracted his brow. "You are too young for such a fate—you must live. Salome!" with a sudden thrill in his tone, that was like the influence of old wine in her veins, "live for me! be my wife, and let me cherish you and win you back to health—let me throw around you the tenderness and care which you need at this time. Ah!" as he marked the swift, rich color that suffused her face, "do not let this excite you; I know it must seem sudden—forced, perhaps; but the exigency of the case demands prompt action. Will you, Salome? will you give yourself to me, who owe you so much? could you learn to love me well enough to be my wife?"

He reached out, took both her hands in his, and looked beseechingly down upon her face.

For a moment she was too surprised and agitated to speak or even to fully comprehend all that this astounding proposal meant to her. It seemed like a beautiful

dream, an entrancing vision which must vanish if she moved or answered him.

Then a quiver of deep, deep joy went thrilling along her nerves like an electric current, the burning blush mounted to her forehead and was lost in the waves of her hair, and her lips trembled with the excess of unexpected happiness.

She lifted her eyes to his in one brief questioning glance as if to assure herself that her ears had not deceived her. It was full of trust, of love, of the deep joy that pervaded her whole being, and Truman Winthrop read all that he wished to know—read that she loved him with her whole soul. But he dared not betray the wild joy that went surging through him at the knowledge, for fear of exciting her.

He simply raised those two white hands that lay so unresistingly in his clasp, and pressed his lips first upon one and then the other.

"Salome, you love me—you will be my wife?" he breathed, and she longed to throw herself upon his breast and surrender herself wholly to the delight of loving and being loved.

Then sudden terror seized her.

If she was to be an invalid for long years, or if she was doomed, and had not long to live, it would be wrong to clog his life, to burden him at the very beginning of his career, with a sick and dying wife. Loving him as she did, she could not bear the thought of bringing such trouble and sorrow upon him. Better to live out her little life alone, even though her heart yearned so strongly for his love and care, and might break in the sacrifice for his sake.

He was watching her and waiting for her answer with what calmness he could assume. He had tried to repress his feelings, and hold himself in check as much as possible, in making this proposal to her, for his knowledge of her condition warned him that any excessive excitement might bring on another fainting turn and do her great injury, and so his full heart was nearly bursting with the wealth of his repressed love; for he had learned to love her dur-

ing this short acquaintance, as he had never believed it possible that he could love any woman.

"Salome!" he entreated, as she was still silent, struggling between love and duty; "answer me, please."

"How can I? I ought not to burden you, all broken in health as I am," she murmured tremulously.

"But you love me?" he questioned eagerly, and trying to look into her downcast eyes.

"Yes—oh, yes! but I must not clog your life."

His face became suddenly glorified—if she could have seen it, maybe she would not have judged him as she did later—but ever thoughtful of her good he held himself well in hand.

"Clog my life," he repeated, in a low, intense, yet calm tone. "To whom do I owe the life that I have to-day? To whom have you sacrificed the strength that you lack to-day? Do not reason thus, Salome—you will be no burden, no clog; you will get well with the right kind of care. I shall take you away from here to a more genial atmosphere—wherever you wish to go—wherever you can be happiest—until you are well and strong; then you shall help me in my work, for a doctor often needs aid and counsel from his wife."

"Do you really believe that I shall ever be well and strong again?" Salome asked doubtfully, lifting her grave eyes to his face, and searching it earnestly.

"I certainly do, under the right conditions—if you can be happy, care-free, and have proper treatment. "Will you marry me, Salome? I dare not excite you too much, but I am very anxious for my answer."

And lifting a flushed and happy face to him, she whispered:

"Yes."

He had put such a relentless curb upon himself for her sake, that this sudden granting of his request was almost more than he could calmly bear, and for a moment he grew ghastly pale from the very intensity of his emotion—this, too, she remembered later, and judged him for it—then he bent quietly forward and touched his lips to her forehead, thus sealing their betrothal.

At that moment the footsteps of the returning nurse sounded in the corridor, and quickly releasing the hands of his betrothed, Dr. Winthrop arose and going to a table, poured out a few quieting drops from a vial, and gave them to Salome. He saw that, in spite of her great new happiness, the interview had been a severe tax upon her small amount of strength, for she was trembling visibly.

A few moments later he took his leave, but promised that he would look in upon her again before evening.

For more than an hour after his departure, Salome lay back in her chair, weak and weary from her recent emotion and excitement, but happier than she had ever expected to be in this world.

She was very pale, but a smile of peace was on her lips, and the light of a new joy shone in her eyes.

"Who would have thought that such a blessed lot was in store for me when I came to this place of suffering, to toil for others, on that dreary day when I was so lonely, so friendless, and thought only of hiding myself from every one who had ever known me?" she mused, as she went over and over again in her mind every incident connected with that recent interview.

She could hardly realize, even now, that she was to be the wife of that grand man; for grand she was sure he was in every sense of the word, although she knew comparatively nothing of him—nothing of his family nor what her life was to be in connection with them.

She only knew that she loved him and trusted him implicitly; that life without him would not be worth an effort to prolong; but with him she felt that she could battle for it with all the power of her strong will. Already it almost seemed as if new vigor had been infused in her veins, and when the nurse brought up her dinner she felt really and thoroughly hungry for the first time during her illness, and she ate heartily, greatly to the delight of her attendant, who had taken especial pains to prepare something tempting and appetizing.

About the middle of the afternoon Dr. Hunt made his appearance, and looked the astonishment he experienced upon seeing her toying with some pretty fancy work.

"Well, well, well!" he exclaimed, and a gleam of amusement began to twinkle in his kind eyes.

After counting her pulse, he playfully pulled one of her ears and inquired, with a roguish smile:

"What is this you have been doing, my young lady?" and he assumed a tone of mock displeasure. "Allowing a strange doctor to come here and steal away one of my best nurses! Give an account of yourself, Miss Howland."

Salome blushed delightfully, and the sweetest little laugh in the world rippled over her lips and was real music in the doctor's ears.

"I don't believe there will be any further shrinking of that heart," he continued with a chuckle. "I no longer fear atrophy; on the contrary, I predict a fatal enlargement of that organ."

"Fatal?" repeated Salome, still blushing, but not quite comprehending his meaning.

"Yes, fatal," he answered, without changing a muscle of his countenance, "for Miss Howland will soon be no more."

"Oh," breathed Salome, with renewed confusion, and darting an appealing glance at him as she made a gesture toward the nurse.

"Oh, it is an open secret," retorted the doctor, enjoying her embarrassment, while the attendant smiled wisely. "Your New York physician evidently intends to carry matters with a high hand and not waste any precious time, for he formally announced his engagement this morning; so of course the news has spread like wildfire."

Doubtless he thought that he had jested enough upon the subject, for he changed the topic.

After a few questions he sent the attendant from the room upon some errand; then he said abruptly and earnestly to Salome:

"My dear," with a tender inflection, for he had become very fond of the girl, "I just want to assure myself that everything is all right, for somehow I have grown to feel a deep interest in you, and I should be very sorry to have any sorrow come to you in the future, because of a too

hasty decision upon so important a matter. You are sure, my child, that you will be happy in the life opening before you? Tell me, Salome, frankly, as you would tell your own father."

"Dr. Hunt, you have been very kind to me ever since I came here, and I will confide in you freely," Salome answered, with heightened color. "From the moment that you began to infuse the life-current from my veins into Dr. Winthrop's I have felt as if I belonged to him and he to me—as if our very souls had been united with the union of our blood. Doubtless some people would affirm that this was only a sentimental idea. It may be so; if it is I cannot help it. To me it is a veritable fact, and I believe if we had been separated—if Dr. Winthrop had gone away and I had never seen him again—he would have carried away so much of my life with him that I should never have rallied; I should have died in spite of all your kind care."

Dr. Hunt believed it too, even while he marvelled at the curious result which his experiment had produced; a result of which he had not had the remotest presentiment.

"You love him, Salome?" he said, regarding her with increasing tenderness.

"With all my heart," she murmured tremulously.

"Then Heaven bless you! I believe you will be a very happy woman in the future," the good physician said heartily, adding: "Dr. Winthrop is an unusually talented man and a skilled physician. I believe he is a noble man, too—upright and conscientious, and I value his friendship highly. He belongs to a fine family, as perhaps you already know—a very wealthy family, too, and considering all things, I am only too glad to surrender my favorite nurse to him, since I cannot keep her here. And I also believe, Salome, that you will get well and strong under the influence of this new happiness."

"I know I shall," she responded confidently, for, with the deep joy in her heart, the conviction had been growing upon her all day.

CHAPTER V.

A ROMANTIC WEDDING.

SALOME grew very thoughtful after Dr. Hunt left her. She had not given a thought to Truman Winthrop's position in life nor to the possibility of his having a family who might not approve of his choice of a wife, and she became quite troubled in spirit.

His family was a very wealthy one—Dr. Hunt had said—consequently they were liable to be a very proud family. Would they be willing to receive a poor young nurse as the bride of the aristocratic and brilliant physician?

She had nothing to give him in return for the wealth and position he would bestow on her, but her true love and a very weak and insufficient hand; while he, situated as he was, might have won almost any one, from the higher walks of life, to be his wife.

More than this, there were certain circumstances connected with her own life which she had forgotten to tell him, during the excitement of his proposal—indeed, he had given her no opportunity to do so, in his eagerness to gain her consent—but which might make him hesitate to marry her.

"I must tell him," she murmured with a troubled brow. "I ought to have told him before he bound himself to me. I must not allow him to sacrifice himself nor his future interests. I must not run the risk of alienating him from his family; I love him far too well to wish to mar his life in any way."

But these thoughts and resolutions made her very nervous and anxious, and when Dr. Winthrop came again late in the afternoon, as he had promised, he found her excited and feverish.

'What is it—what troubles you, Salome?" he inquired as he took her hot, dry hand and was startled by the almost spasmodic twitching of her small fingers.

"I have been thinking—I have something to tell you—I ought to have told you before, all about myself and my family——" she began tremulously.

"Hush!" he commanded, with gentle authority, "you shall tell me nothing while you are in this state; you are not even to think of anything that annoys you——"

"But——"

"I care nothing about your genealogy or previous history just now," he said, stopping her short; then added, "I am sure there can be nothing connected with either for which you have cause to blush."

"No, indeed!" interposed Salome, with a proud uplifting of her small head, a smile of conscious rectitude curling her lips. "As a child I was very tenderly reared; I had every advantage, I was happy, beloved, and while my mother lived there was not a more harmonious family in the world; but—later——" a shiver ran over her as certain painful memories suddenly arose.

"Hush!" said Dr. Winthrop again, for she had begun to tremble violently, and grow red and white by turns, "this excites you, and you shall not talk any more about it. I am satisfied with you as you are, Salome; you have told me that you are alone in the world, and so your antecedents cannot affect me in any way since you have assured me that no taint rests upon them. Just see how unnerved you are becoming, my child," as in her weak state her teeth actually began to chatter. "You are not to talk any more on this subject now; some other time when you are strong and well you shall tell me all the trials and troubles of your past, which you think I ought to know. I am sure, however, that there will be nothing that I could condemn; the only thing I could not forgive would be a wilful deception on your part regarding your affection for me—you are sure that you love me, Salome?"

His tone was grave and earnest, and he regarded her searchingly as he asked the question.

She lifted her beautiful eyes to his, and he read in them only truth and constancy, even before she answered:

"Oh, with my whole soul!" and her fingers closed almost convulsively over the hand that was holding hers.

"And you have never loved any one before?"

"No—no; never," she said, with strange vehemence, while another shiver, like a sudden chill, ran over her frame.

"That is all I want to know of your past at present," he said. "And now, when will you be my wife, Salome? You are ill, and though you might perhaps have the best of care here, I do not feel that I can leave my betrothed in a city hospital, when it is in my power to provide her with every comfort. I must leave for New York by the last of this week, and I want to take you with me; so there will have to be a little knot tied right away."

"So soon," murmured Salome, but with a thrill of joy over the knowledge that he was unwilling to be separated from her.

"Yes—so soon," he repeated, smiling, "as soon as to-morrow, or the next day at the farthest."

"But your family—they do not know—what will they think? How will they receive me?" she stammered, her face crimson, her heart fluttering.

"My family can have comparatively little to do with this most vital question of my life," Dr. Winthrop gravely replied. "They are all in Europe at present—my father and mother, my brother and sister; but when they return, they will assuredly accord my wife a proper reception."

His tone was not reassuring; somehow it seemed to confirm her fears that they were proud, haughty, and exclusive.

She looked up into his face, a troubled expression upon hers.

"What is it?" he asked kindly.

"Dr. Hunt tells me that they are wealthy, aristocratic; I am only a poor nurse—are you sure you will never regret? are you sure——"

"I shall never regret choosing you for my wife, Salome," he answered quietly. "Of what else do you wish me to be sure?"

"That—that you—love me!" she whispered, trembling.

Oh, how he longed to catch her to his heart, smother her with kisses, and caresses, and pour out all the passionate love that was surging so fiercely within him; but he dared not. Already she was laboring under far more excitement than was good for her, and he was afraid to augment it.

But again he made a mistake, for the surest way to have soothed and quieted her would have been to assure her of his deep and absorbing affection. He did not realize, in his anxiety to care for her health, that he was withholding just the food which her hungry heart craved and needed most. She longed for the spontaneous overflow of a love akin to her own, and could not be quite satisfied with the quiet, self-contained manner in which he had wooed her.

He passed his arm about her slight form and asked, with something of reproach in the forced calmness of his tone:

"Can you doubt it, Salome, when I asked you to assume the most sacred relations to me? Can you not trust me?"

"Yes," she answered, regarding him wistfully, and beginning to feel very weary—too weary to longer argue the point; but still not quite satisfied.

It had occurred to her that perhaps gratitude for what she had done for him, and pity for her in her illness, her homeless and friendless condition, might perhaps have influenced him somewhat in asking her to marry him; that, perchance, he felt he owed it to her to take care of her and try to restore her to health, in return for her sacrifice in saving his life.

But such an interpretation of his motives was like a dagger in her heart, and she put it quickly away, telling herself that he could not be so untrue to himself and her; that his calm, quiet, dignified manner was natural to him, and like deep waters whose powerful undercurrent could not be detected upon the surface.

"Thank you," he said, a tender smile illuminating his face, which she did not see unfortunately, as her wistful glance had drooped an instant before. "And may I tell

Dr. Hunt and the superintendent that you will become my wife to-morrow?"

"Yes."

As well, perhaps better, to-morrow than later, she thought in her weakness, only too glad to leave the decision and all arrangements to him.

. . . . . .

The next afternoon there was a quiet wedding in the reception-room belonging to the matron of the hospital. It was witnessed only by the nurse who had attended Salome, the matron, the superintendent, and good Dr. Hunt, who asked the privilege of giving the bride away.

It was a strange wedding, but an impressive one, for there were certain elements of romance and mystery connected with it which could not fail to make themselves felt. The critical condition and delicacy of the bride, together with her apparent friendlessness, made the occasion extremely pathetic to all save Salome herself, who was surprisingly calm. There was a light upon her face and in her eyes which plainly revealed her great love for the man to whose care and keeping she had so freely given herself, and for whom she had yielded her precious life-blood.

She looked very lovely in her pretty dress of gray silk —another treasure which had been stored away in her trunk, and which had caused the nurse, who acted as maid, to open her eyes in surprise as she remarked its richness of texture and trimming.

"One would never believe you to be a poor nurse with such lovely clothes as you have, Miss Howland," she had remarked as her glance lingered upon other dainty articles in the well-filled trunk from which it had been exhumed.

Salome made no reply, but a curious little smile in which there was a tinge of bitterness curved her beautiful lips as she shook out the folds of her lustrous silk and then gave it to her to be made ready for her bridal.

Her only ornament when she was dressed was an exquisite bouquet of long-stemmed white roses tied with a heavy white ribbon, which the thoughtful groom had provided for her.

When the clergyman called for the seal to their vows, Dr. Winthrop produced a heavy band of gold and slipped it upon Salome's finger, solemnly repeating the words, "With this ring I thee wed and with all my worldly goods I thee endow." But the shining circlet proved to be far too large, and came near falling off again, a circumstance which made the bride turn pale and shiver slightly, as some imp of misery suddenly suggested it was perhaps ominous, and that this great new happiness might even now slip from her grasp as the ring seemed ready to slip from her finger.

She was obliged to close her hand in order to hold it in its place, and the constant care of it distracted her and made her nervous.

The ceremony was followed by brief congratulations from those present, after which they were served with cake and wine, Dr. Hunt's kind provision for the occasion.

"I shall forbid the cake, Mrs. Winthrop," the good man smilingly said, as he approached Salome with a little salver on which, for form's sake, he had placed a plate containing a liberal supply of the forbidden luxury and a glass of wine, "but the wine I prescribe for you; and now," lifting his own glass, "permit me to drink to your health and future happiness, my dear madam."

Salome blushed at her new name, smiled brightly, and then with exquisite grace touched the brim of her glass to his and drank with him.

Her manner was perfect, and Dr. Winthrop, watching her with a proud light in his eyes, marvelled at it.

"One would think she had been reared amid all the formal observances of etiquette," he said to himself, and experienced no little satisfaction over the fact.

But he was careful not to allow her to become wearied, and soon took her back to her room.

He led her to her easy-chair and gently seated her; then before he released her hand—her left hand—he glanced at the ring which he had so recently placed there.

"It is too large, dear," he said with a smile. "I knew it would be, and chose it so purposely, for I expect that these frail fingers will soon fill out again. In that case,

if the ring had fitted now, it would have had to be removed to be enlarged, and that I could not think of allowing, so I have a guard to keep it where it belongs."

As he spoke he quietly slipped another ring upon her finger, and, glancing down, Salome was astonished to behold a magnificent solitaire—a diamond of the purest water, heavily and substantially set.

"Oh!" she cried, flushing, "a simple band would have done just as well—this is very costly."

Dr. Winthrop's eyes twinkled with amusement.

"Well, what of that? you had no betrothal ring; you can regard this as such if you like," he said.

"But—something not so expensive would have answered just as well," she replied.

"No, dear, it would not—allow me to be the judge," he quietly returned. "I consider diamonds none too good for my wife, as I will prove still further to you." And he drew from his pocket a black morocco case, and opening it he laid it on her lap, adding, "Mrs. Winthrop, accept your husband's wedding-gift."

Salome was almost dazzled by the gleam of light that shot up into her eyes, for before her there lay, upon a crimson satin cushion, a beautiful pair of diamond earrings and a lace pin in which there were five exquisite stones to match the others.

"Why! why!" she cried, astonished, almost dismayed by such lavishness.

"Well, do they not please you?" he questioned, secretly amused by her perplexed expression.

"They are beautiful, and you are very kind," she said; "but——"

"You are afraid that I am extravagant—that I cannot afford such expenditure—is that it?" he asked.

She nodded, smiling a little that he should have read her thoughts so readily.

"Do not trouble your pretty head about anything so intensely practical on your wedding-day, Mrs. Winthrop," he laughingly returned. "The stones are very fine ones, I am willing to admit, but none too fine for you; besides, I feel very rich just now."

"Rich?" she repeated, not quite comprehending the look that he bent upon her.

"Yes, I regard myself as the richest man in the United States at this moment, in the possession of the dearest wife that man ever won. Salome, you have not yet greeted your husband," and he knelt beside her, looking wistfully into her eyes.

Oh, how foolish now seemed her ominous fears of the insecurity of her wedding-ring and her future happiness! And she was conscience-smitten for having entertained them for a moment.

She flushed a quick scarlet at his words, and impulsively laid her white hands upon his shoulders, lifted her fair face to his, and kissed him softly on the lips.

"You do love me," she murmured.

He started slightly and searched her eyes.

"Have you doubted it?" he questioned, a shadow of pain crossing his brow.

"I—I hoped you did not merely pity me because I was ill and alone in the world," she faltered "I could not have borne that out of simple gratitude you should have wished to give me your protection."

"Child! child! did you fear that?" he asked reproachfully. "What can I say to relieve such doubts? You must trust me more fully than that, Salome, or I fear you will not be very happy."

He spoke gently, fondly, but even then he did not pour out his great love into her yearning ears. It had become so natural to him to be cautious and to repress all outward demonstrations that he did not realize how much he was depriving her of.

Still he had revealed so much more than he had hitherto, that she was very happy, and she was sorry that she had betrayed her foolish fears.

"Forgive me," she said, with starting tears.

He lifted her downcast face and returned the caress she had just given him.

"It is easy to pardon you," he said, smiling—then added: "Now, little woman, you must rest for an hour or

two, then I am going to take you away from here to some more fitting place, and to-morrow we will go home."

Home! How her heart thrilled at the word, and beneath his caress.

Home! She had not realized until that moment how much of happiness was already hers, in possessing such a husband and the right to share his home; and she pictured in her own mind how delightful she would make it for him, if she could but recover her strength; how she would try, with all her will, to get strong, so that she could minister to his comfort, and make herself all that he could desire in a wife.

"Would you prefer to go home by boat or rail?" he asked, breaking in upon these thoughts.

"Oh, by rail, if it will be just as agreeable to you," she answered eagerly.

"But are you strong enough to endure so long a ride? you could sleep, you know, on board a steamer," he returned.

"Yes, I am strong enough, and do not wish to sleep the journey away. I love to travel, and even though it is winter, and the scenery will be gray and sombre, I am sure it will be very enjoyable—with *you*," she said shyly.

His face lighted; it thrilled him to see how she loved to be in his presence.

"Then it shall be as you wish," he said, something of his gladness vibrating in his tones. "Now, dear, let me see you comfortably resting, and then I must go to make arrangements for our departure."

He gathered her slight form in his strong arms, before she was aware of his intention, and, bearing her across the room, laid her gently upon her bed; then once more touching her forehead with his lips, he went away, and ten minutes later Salome was quietly sleeping, but with a smile of perfect content lighting her pale face.

CHAPTER VI.

SALOME GOES "HOME."

SALOME was surprised, when she awoke, to find that she had slept only half an hour, for she usually had a nap of two hours during the afternoon.

But she felt refreshed and very happy, and it was such a delightful sensation, after all the sorrow and loneliness of the past, to feel that she belonged to some one who was so tenderly thoughtful of her comfort and pleasure, and to know that she need have no care or anxiety for her future.

Her diamonds were still clasped in her hands, and her heart thrilled anew with deepest joy as she recalled her husband's fond words upon presenting them to her; how he had sued for her first caress and the response to it.

"He loves me. I will believe that he loves me as fondly as I love him," she murmured; "and yet I wish he were a little more free—a little less self-contained and dignified or reserved. Perhaps," she added with a faint sigh, "it will wear away as we grow to know each other better."

By and by the nurse came to her for directions for the packing of her trunk, and before this was completed she caught the sound of her husband's step in the corridor, and the red blood mounted to her brow, her lips quivered in a happy smile, and her eyes grew luminous with joy.

"My husband!" she murmured, and turned her glad face toward him as he came into the room, while she noticed that he carried a large box in his hand.

"Have you rested well, my Peace?" he asked, in a low tone, as he reached her side.

Her heart leaped at his tone. Surely it was fonder than she had ever heard it before!

"Yes, thank you; but—why do you call me that?" she asked, wondering at the form of his address.

"Salome means peaceful, does it not?" he said, smiling, "and you always give me a feeling of peace when I come near you."

She flushed again happily at his words, and put out her hand to him with a confiding movement.

He caught it and pressed it fondly.

"Are you ready to go with me?" he asked.

"Oh, yes; quite ready, if you wish me to go now."

"I have arranged to go to an hotel for to-night near the station, where we shall take the train for New York to-morrow at nine o'clock, so you will not be fatigued with a long ride before starting. Now, nurse, please bring Mrs. Winthrop's wraps, for our carriage is at the door."

Salome was quickly clad in the long, dark ulster and the same simple brown felt hat and thick veil which she had worn when she first came to the hospital. She wondered with a quiet smile, as she put them on, if ever a bride was fitted out for her wedding journey with so little fuss before.

Dr. Winthrop watched every article as it was put on; but when she was ready he quietly remarked, as he cut the string to the box which he had brought with him:"

"I do not dare to allow you to go out this first time since your illness, unless you are very warmly clad; so let me wrap this about you."

He drew forth a beautiful fur-lined cloak as he spoke, and, throwing it around her, bent down to fasten the clasp at the neck with his own hands.

The nurse looked on with astonishment.

"He must be made of money," she said to herself, as she slyly felt the heavy satin.

Salome's lips quivered at this fresh evidence of his thoughtfulness.

"How good you are to me, Dr. Winthrop," she murmured.

He drew back and looked down into her face, his hands still holding the clasp of the cloak.

"I am Dr. Winthrop to my patients, Salome," he said gravely, but with a little twinkle in his eyes.

She understood him.

"What shall I call you?" she asked, flushing, her eyes drooping from embarrassment, though her face dimpled with suppressed amusement over the ridiculousness of the situation, for, strange to say, she did not know the Christian name of the man whom she had married!

Dr. Hunt had introduced him, and always spoken of him simply as Dr. Winthrop. The card accompanying his first floral gift had had "T. H. Winthrop, M.D.," inscribed upon it; he had never told her what the intials stood for, and she had shrunk from asking.

He looked amazed at her question, and then he laughed outright.

"Is it possible, my Peace, that you do not know your husband's name?" he exclaimed.

"It is not only possible, but a fact, sir," Salome answered, meeting his glance, and a sparkle of mischief dancing in the dark eyes. "But our acquaintance has not been of very long standing, you must remember."

"It has surely been long enough for that, but for my thoughtlessness," he returned deprecatingly, and with some annoyance. "I imagined that you knew—that Dr. Hunt must have told you. My name is Truman, dear—do not call me Dr. Winthrop again, Salome, please."

Truman! how rightly he had been named, she thought; she had imagined it might, perhaps, be Thomas or Theodore. He was true, noble, good—a true man in every sense of the word, and the name fitted him exactly, and —blessed fact! she was his wife!

"Are you ready now?" her husband continued, when she had drawn on her gloves and he had fastened them for her.

"Yes," she answered, "when I have said good-by to nurse."

".You have been very kind to me, and I thank you," she said, with tears in her eyes, while the woman, too, seemed deeply moved, for she had grown to love her charge.

As Salome turned to leave the room, Dr. Winthrop slipped an envelope into the hand of the nurse, then, hastening to his wife's side, supported her down the stairs and to the entrance of the hospital.

Dr. Hunt and the superintendent were waiting there to take leave of them.

"I do not know that I am quite reconciled to having New York doctors coming to Massachusetts and carrying off our nurses in this summary fashion," Dr. Hunt playfully remarked, as he shook Salome warmly by the hand.

She smiled, but somewhat tremulously, for she had become strongly attached to the good man, and was sorry to say farewell to him.

"If you will come to New York a month hence I promise that you will hardly recognize your nurse," the younger physician smilingly remarked, with a tender glance at the face beside him.

He would not allow her to linger over the farewells, but hurried her out to the carriage, and they were soon driving rapidly down-town.

Arriving at the hotel, Salome was shown to a handsome suite of rooms on the second floor, and, a little later, a tempting dinner was served them in their private parlor.

Afterward Dr. Winthrop kept his wife engaged in pleasant conversation for an hour, and then told her that she must go to her rest, so as to be fresh for her journey on the morrow.

"I am going to be very, very careful of you for a while, Salome," he said, as he led her toward one of the rooms opening out of their parlor, "and a maid will come to you presently to wait on you, for I know that you are not yet able to wait on yourself; then you will try to go to sleep at once, will you not?"

"Yes."

"My room is just opposite," he continued. "I shall leave the door open, and if you should need or wish anything during the night will you speak to me?"

"I shall not need anything——" Salome began.

"Promise that you will speak if you do," he persisted, with gentle authority; or," he added, with sudden

thought, "you have had a nurse for so long, would you prefer to have the maid remain with you? I will have a cot arranged for her."

"No, I shall do very well by myself, and I will speak if I need anything," Salome promised, thinking how thoughtful he was for her every need.

"Thank you; and now good-night, dear," he returned, as he kissed her.

"Good-night, Doctor True," she responded, flushing slightly, as for the first time she addressed him thus.

"Thank you again, Salome, and by and by, perhaps, you will forget the prefix," he said, smiling, and with the thrill in his tone that she was beginning to watch for.

A light tap came upon the door just then, and Dr. Winthrop retreated to the parlor.

A pretty maid assisted Salome to retire, and in less than half an hour she was sleeping as peacefully and restfully as a child.

She did not wake once during the night, but opened her eyes in the morning just as the clock on the mantel began to strike seven, when she suddenly became conscious that the apartment was filled with fragrance.

The next moment she saw, lying upon the pillow beside her, a great handful of roses.

"Oh, how perfectly lovely!" she cried in a voice of delight, a flush of pleasure mounting to her brow, and she knew that her husband must have stolen softly in with his morning offering before she was awake.

She sat up and gathered them into her hands, eagerly burying her face among the crimson beauties and inhaling their fragrance.

The next moment there came a tap upon the door leading into the parlor, and the girl who had attended her the evening before came in to help her dress.

It was half-past seven when she entered their parlor, where Dr. Winthrop sat reading the morning paper awaiting her appearance.

He sprang at once to meet her, his face lighting up.

He took both her hands, roses and all, and drew her to him.

"Surely you have slept well, dear," he said, "for there is a little color in your cheeks this morning."

The color deepened as she laughed lightly and laid her roses against his face.

"You must know that I did," she replied, "even better than well, or I certainly should have awakened when these were laid upon my pillow."

Dr. Winthrop smiled.

"I took a long horse-car ride this morning a little way out of town and walked back," he said. "On my way I was overtaken by a man driving in with cut flowers, and that is how you happened to get your roses, Salome."

"They are lovely—thank you, Dr. True."

He smiled to see that she still clung to the medical prefix, but believed she would drop it when her shyness should wear off a little, and so said nothing about it.

"Our breakfast is waiting," he said, "and we shall have just about time enough to get comfortably ready for our trip. Shall you be glad to get home, little wife?"

Tears rushed to Salome's eyes at the question.

"I cannot tell you what a charm there is in that word for me," she said tremulously.

"Nor I, dear, now that I am not obliged to go back to the place alone," he returned, with a satisfied smile.

Then he helped her to the breast of a chicken and toasted her a slice of bread over a tiny brazier, for he would not allow her to have hot rolls just yet, while she poured out the coffee.

He kept her attention by pleasant and genial conversation throughout the meal, and she felt sorry when it was over, while she became aware that she had eaten her first really hearty breakfast since her illness.

Then they had to get ready for the train, where Salome found that they were to have the state-room of the parlor-car. Here she could lie down and rest if she became weary, and was free to do exactly as she chose.

She was touched as she noticed this and other kind provisions her thoughtful husband had made for her; for on a little stand there was a dainty basket of choice fruit, a bottle of wine, and several new books.

She never forgot that ride of six hours—it was a sacred memory to her during all her future life.

Her husband was all kindness and attention. He talked with her for a while, then read to her until she became weary, when he made her lie down and sat beside her, and, to pass away the time, related many interesting incidents connected with his profession.

The day was somewhat raw, and he would not allow her to pass from their car to the dining-car, but ordered their dinner brought to them, and they had a merry time over the meal by themselves.

The long ride seemed very short, and she could hardly believe Dr. Winthrop when he told her that in less than fifteen minutes they would be in New York City.

When they alighted from the car, a man in dark-green livery stepped up to the young physician, and saluted him respectfully, but glanced curiously at Salome as he did so.

"Ah, Dick, then you received my telegram, and are on hand, like the faithful fellow you always are," said Dr. Winthrop pleasantly, as he returned the man's greeting.

"Yes, sir, thank ye, sir; and the carriage be waiting for ye outside," the man responded.

"All right, Dick; you can take our luggage," Dr. Winthrop replied as he surrendered Salome's travelling-bag and his own portmanteau to him; then with an amused smile, as he caught the man's covert glances of curiosity he added, "Dick, this lady is Mrs. Winthrop."

The man's eyes grew large with astonishment, but he doffed his hat respectfully in return for Salome's kind smile and bow, and set her down at once as "a leddy."

He led the way to the carriage—a handsome one drawn by a pair of fine jet-black horses. Everything about the equipage indicated that the owner was a man of abundant means.

The footman opened the door and held it, while Dr. Winthrop assisted Salome to enter and carefully folded the soft robes about her to protect her from the air, for the mercury had dropped several degrees since morning.

"Are you comfortable, dear?" he asked in a somewhat anxious tone as they started, for he dreaded her taking cold.

"Very, thank you," Salome answered, somewhat absently, for she was half-dazed by all these evidences of unlimited wealth into which she had so suddenly been transplanted.

"You are sure," he persisted; "we have a long ride before us, and I would not have you take cold for anything. You have endured the journey much better than I dared to think you would. You are stronger, Salome—you feel really stronger, do you not?"

"Yes, I am sure I have made great progress during these last few days," she replied smiling gratefully into his earnest face.

How could she help improving under the tender care which he so constantly threw around her?

"And you will be very happy in your new home, I hope, Salome."

"I surely ought to be. I am very happy now," she softly returned, with flushing cheeks and gleaming eyes, "but—but I did not think that you were—that I was to have all this," and she glanced around the elegant carriage in which they were rolling so smoothly up-town.

Dr. Winthrop laughed softly, and there was a little touch of triumph in the sound.

"Then you did not imagine that you were marrying a rich man, when you gave your hand to me, Salome?"

"No."

"What did you think, my Peace?—you have never told me; what kind of a position did you imagine you were to occupy as my wife?"

"I did not think of position at all," Salome answered musingly. "I knew, of course, you were a physician, and I knew that, some time, you would win a high place in the world."

"Why?" he interposed. "What made you think so?"

"Because," she said, lifting her beautiful eyes to his face and letting them rest there proudly, "no one ever had so grand a head, so intelligent a face, without the ability to climb where he would."

"Thank you, my wife," the young man responded with lips that were slightly tremulous, for her estimate of him moved him deeply.

"But," she went on, "I did not give much thought to your circumstances; I only know that my life could never be complete apart from you—my heart, my very being, had become bound up in you, yourself, to the exclusion of every other thought, or wish, or hope."

The words were low, but so fraught with tenderness and feeling that they swayed, almost intoxicated, the strong man beside her like old wine.

Impulsively he gathered her to him, and held her close against his breast.

"My wife—my Peace—my love," he whispered, "how glad I am, for your sake, that I am wealthy—that I can shower upon you every earthly blessing. Oh, I hope that you will be happy with me, Salome."

She wondered, as she lay there against his heart, how she could have doubted his love. She believed that she never could doubt him again, for his clasp, his tone, his look seemed to tell her that she was the very mainspring of his life, and she could almost have wept from excess of happiness.

But she thought it would never do to christen her home-coming with tears; so, hiding her emotion beneath the semblance of gentle mirth, she said gayly:

"You must not spoil me to begin with, Dr. True—dear True," with a sly glance and blush as she thus changed the prefix, "for you cannot tell what a tyrant I may become. And you must not forget, either, that it was only a poor nurse whom you have married. But when are you going to let me tell you just who and what I am?"

"I'll risk your being spoiled or becoming a tyrant, sweetheart, and as to who you are, I know already," he answered, his face fairly luminous over her low-toned "dear True."

She looked up with a strangely startled expression, he thought, and all her color fled as she asked:

"Who?"

"Why, Mrs. Dr. Truman Winthrop, of No. — Madison Avenue, of course. And now," as the carriage suddenly stopped, "here we are at home."

CHAPTER VII.

DR. WINTHROP RECEIVES A DISPATCH.

THE carriage had drawn up before an imposing house, and Salome observed that other fine residences lined both sides of the spacious street.

Her husband assisted her to alight, led her up the steps to the entrance, and rang the bell. The door was almost immediately opened by a servant, who appeared greatly pleased at the return of the master of the house.

Dr. Winthrop conducted Salome through the wide and lofty hall to the elegant drawing-room on the right, where he seated her in a luxurious chair and murmured in her ear.

"Welcome home, my Salome."

"What an exquisite room!" she thought, as her eyes roved appreciatively about the apartment, noting the soft-hued carpet and beautiful draperies, the furniture of carved ebony, the rare pictures, choice statuary, and bric-a-brac of every description.

Dr. Winthrop rang another bell and gave orders for dinner, telling the maid, when she had notified the cook, to come upstairs to the south suite to attend Mrs. Winthrop.

Then he gave his arm again to Salome, and led her up the grand stairway to a suite of rooms directly over the drawing-room.

These were furnished in pale pink and white. The boudoir was fitted up with every convenience and elegance. The furniture was most luxurious; there were costly pictures upon the walls and beautiful vases and ornaments in profusion upon the tables and mantel.

Opening from this charming room was the bed-room, where the low French bedstead was richly draped with

antique lace over pale pink silk and a coverlet to match. Hangings of the same hue and material shaded the windows, and every appointment of the chamber betrayed exquisite taste.

Beyond, there was a bath and dressing-room which contained every luxury any one could desire, from the porcelain bath down to the simplest toilet appendage.

"These rooms," said Dr. Winthrop, as he led Salome through them, "are for your own private use, dear, and while, as mistress here, you are of course to have the freedom of the whole house, yet you can flee here and shut yourself away whenever you are inclined, and no one shall intrude upon you. Remember, Salome, we are going to make it our first and chief business to get you well and strong, and until that end is attained you are to be perfectly free from care of every kind. I have a competent housekeeper," he continued, "who will look after the household, subject, of course, to your orders and wishes, without vexing you with any of the details. Now, dear," looking at his watch, "I want you to rest until dinner time, which is seven o'clock; then if you feel able to come down to dine with me it will give me pleasure; if you do not you must feel free to stay quietly here; you have had a long journey, and must be very weary," he concluded, regarding her with some anxiety, as he stooped to touch her forehead with his lips.

Tears sprang to the young wife's eyes.

"How good you are to me! how thoughtful!" she said, reaching up her white hand, and laying it against his cheek. "Oh, I hope I shall get well and strong soon. I hope I can make you happy."

"If you are happy, do not fear but I shall be also," he responded tenderly.

"How can I be otherwise in this lovely home?" Salome said, as she glanced around the luxurious room, adding earnestly, "and with you."

He thanked her for those last words with a look that brought a lovely color to her cheeks. Then he said, as some one tapped upon the door:

"Here comes Nellie to attend you; let her undress

you, so that you can rest more comfortably, and try to sleep if you can."

He left her then, and she heard him cross the hall and enter another room.

She went obediently to bed, telling Nellie that she might come to her again, and in a little while she had fallen into a restful slumber.

She felt greatly refreshed when she awoke, and, her trunk having arrived, she allowed Nellie to help her dress in the pretty gray silk in which she had been married, and then, with some delicate pink roses—which Dr. Winthrop had sent up—fastened in her corsage, she went down to her husband, looking brighter and lovelier than he had yet seen her.

She found the dining-room in perfect keeping with the rest of the house—finished in natural wood, the floor inlaid in an intricate and lovely pattern—the furniture beautifully carved, and upholstered in embossed leather.

In the centre of the room there stood a table covered with a heavy white damask cloth and spread with a glittering array of cut-glass and silver, while a butler stood waiting to serve them.

Dr. Winthrop led Salome to one end of the table and then took his own place opposite.

More and more the young wife found herself wondering how a man of Dr. Winthrop's apparent wealth and position could have been drawn toward a poor girl who had been a common nurse in a hospital, and have been willing to make her his wife without inquiring more particularly regarding her history.

But there was a curious little smile hovering about her lips, as she took her seat at the table and for the first time assumed the duties of her new position, and Dr. Winthrop soon found himself wondering at his wife's perfect self-possession in it—at the inimitable grace which characterized every movement, as if all her life she had been accustomed to the luxuries, the form and etiquette by which she was now environed.

When dinner was over he led her to another room, which was fitted up as a library and music-room.

Handsome book-cases filled with books lined the walls. A fine piano stood in one corner, and the hangings and furniture were of olive and old gold. There were rare pictures here also, while in every nook and corner there was some object of beauty and luxury.

Dr. Winthrop exerted himself to entertain his bride, and neither had any idea of the lapse of time until the clock struck ten, when the young physician glanced at Salome in dismay half real, half assumed.

"A fine physician I am!" he exclaimed, "to keep an invalid up until this hour. Dr. Hunt would surely read me a severe lecture if he knew it."

"But I am not in the least tired. I had such a nice nap before dinner," Salome returned, with shining eyes and pink cheeks.

"Nevertheless I am going to send you directly to bed," her husband said, as he arose and led her to the door of her boudoir, where he folded her close in his arms for a moment.

"I hope you will sleep well, dear," he cried, "and that I shall find these faint roses in your cheeks a little brighter in the morning."

He opened the door for her to pass in, then shut it softly after her, and went across the hall to his own apartment, a tender smile on his lips.

Salome seemed better and stronger the next day, in spite of the fatigue of her long journey, and every day after that for a week she continued to improve, while life seemed to her like a beautiful poem set to sweetest music. She took no medicine, her husband prescribing only nourishing diet and mild stimulants for her, but happiness was the best tonic she could have had, and its effect was almost magical.

Every fine day they went out driving together in their close carriage. Dr. Winthrop would not consent to an open vehicle at present, although Salome begged for it; he feared she would take cold, and he was very watchful and careful, for he knew that even a little relapse would be a very serious injury to her.

Their evenings were passed either in pleasant conversa-

tion, or he read aloud to her from some entertaining book or periodical; but they received no calls, and sometimes Salome wondered if Dr. Winthrop's friends even knew that he was married.

It was a fact that scarcely any one outside their own household did know it, although the young man had cabled the news to his family in Europe on the day of his marriage. Salome was so extremely delicate, that he would not allow her to be subjected to the calls and curiosity of his numerous acquaintances, until she should be entirely recovered.

One day, after dinner, Salome asked her husband if she might have the piano opened.

"Why, yes, certainly. Do you play?" he asked, surprised. It had not occurred to him that she could be musical.

"I used to," she answered simply, "but it is a long time since I have touched a piano," and sitting down before the beautiful instrument, she ran her supple fingers along the key-board. Her husband instantly recognized a cultivated touch, and began to look about for some music.

"My sister is a fine musician," he said, "and perhaps you can find something among her collections which you can play."

Salome smiled as she glanced over the pile that he brought her, for much of it was familiar to her, and she played steadily to him for half an hour or more.

Then all at once she broke forth into a little song which she sang from memory.

The sound of her voice seemed to make her forget where she was, or that she had a listener—everything but that she was happy, and free to let her glad tones ring out as they would.

Dr. Winthrop was electrified, for her voice was exquisite—clear, strong, and flexible.

"Why, Salome, you never told me that you were musical!" he exclaimed half reproachfully, when the song was finished; "and you are really quite an artist."

"You never asked me," she demurely answered, "and I've had very little opportunity to tell you anything."

"Perhaps you have other astonishing accomplishments. I shall begin to think you have married me under false pretences," he returned smilingly.

Salome started violently, and darted a half-frightened look at him; but he did not see it, and went on playfully:

"Perhaps you are even a connoisseur in art."

"No, indeed; I would not presume to say that; but I have had some instruction in painting and drawing," she modestly answered.

"Salome, you have been finely educated—your advantages, evidently, were of the very best," Dr. Winthrop remarked, regarding her admiringly, for every day developed something new and interesting in her.

"Yes," she admitted thoughtfully, "and, True, it is time I told you my history—it is time you should know all about your wife's antecedents. I am strong enough now, surely, to speak of the past, even though there is much that is painful connected with it, without becoming unduly excited, and I want you to know all there is to tell—I want to have no secrets from you."

"Then there are secrets even in your life, Salome!" her husband remarked, regarding her with a fond smile; but he did not imagine that she could have anything very vital to conceal.

"Yes," she said; "but I have no desire to keep them from you."

"Very well, dear; you shall tell me everything, and I must confess that you have at last effectually aroused my curiosity," the young man said, laughing; then he added: "Come and sit in the easy-chair, and then I will give you my undivided attention."

Salome rose and came forward, but at that moment the bell rang, and a servant entered, saying there was an urgent call for Dr. Winthrop.

He had to go away immediately, so, of course, that put a stop to all confidence for that evening.

The next morning, while they were at breakfast, he received a cable message, notifying him that his mother and sister would sail that day for America.

Salome fancied that there was a cloud on her husband's

brow after reading this dispatch, but he made no comment, and therefore she did not feel like questioning him.

He was very busy after that for several days, calls coming in upon him thick and fast, and Salome saw comparatively little of him, excepting in the evenings, and then he seemed so weary and preoccupied that she did not deem it best to broach the subject of their interrupted conversation, but sought to entertain and amuse him by music and reading.

"Tell me about your mother and sister," she pleaded one evening, as the time of their return drew near.

She had longed to know something definite about them, but as he seemed somewhat reticent regarding them, she had not, until now, questioned him.

A peculiar expression flashed over Dr. Winthrop's face at his wife's request.

"My mother is a very handsome, dignified woman, a little over fifty years of age, although no one would imagine her to be over forty. She traces her lineage to one of the old Colonial families, and is happy in being one of the leaders in that charmed circle known as 'New York's Four Hundred.' My sister is, if possible, more beautiful, more stately, and more proud than my mother."

Salome looked troubled at this brief but ominously suggestive description, while she had never heard her husband assume such a cynical tone before.

"Do they know——" she began timidly.

"That I am married? Yes; I cabled to them immediately after the ceremony, and wrote them briefly later," he replied.

"Have you heard from them since?" breathed Salome.

"Not in response to those communications."

"Will they be pleased—will they—love me?" the young wife wistfully asked, drawing a little nearer to him, as if seeking protection against some approaching evil.

Dr. Winthrop's brow clouded.

He had known from the first that his family would be anything but pleased with his hasty and romantic marriage. Indeed the fact that they had entirely ignored

both his cable message and letter proved this. He was confident that his mother and sister were now hastening home for no other purpose than to denounce him for his rashness, if they should find that he had chosen a wife outside the pale of their charmed circle, for many years ago a far different choice had been made for him;—but of this more later.

"True, tell me—will they be pleased to find that you have a wife?" Salome said again, as he did not answer her at once.

"I hope so, my Peace," he gently returned, but she was far from feeling reassured.

Something seemed to warn her that the coming of these two women would cast a shadow, if not a fatal blight, upon her happiness, and she dreaded their arrival inexpressibly.

She said nothing, however—she would not let her husband see that she feared to meet his friends; but her dread was not lessened when the next morning he began to question her regarding the condition of her wardrobe.

He smiled when she named over what she had.

"Little woman, this will never do at all," he said; "we must go to-day and select something more suitable for Mrs. Winthrop, of Madison avenue."

A morning's vigorous shopping under the skilful eyes of Dr. Winthrop wrought a wonderful addition to her wardrobe. Dainty costumes, laces, gloves, and every luxury of the toilet were selected as well as several pieces of rare jewelry.

"Is there anything else, dear, that you can think of?" Dr. Winthrop questioned, as they were leaving Tiffany's.

"Do not ask me, Dr. True," Salome answered, flushing, "for I feel oppressed now with what you have expended upon me."

"Salome," said her husband gravely, "please never speak to me of any feeling of obligation—more than that, do not entertain any such feeling. When I put that ring upon your finger did I not endow you with all that I possess? What is mine is also thine, dear, and there is enough to gratify every reasonable wish, and to spare.

You will best please me, Salome, by providing yourself with everything that a lady in your position needs."

When they reached home he drew her into the library, where he gave her a cheque book.

"When you need money, Salome, you need not ask me for it—I think that must be exceedingly galling to a woman; but just fill out one of these cheques and get what you wish. I have signed a number of them, so all you need to do will be to present them at the bank. But," he added, "as you cannot do that until you go out again, let me give you something to begin upon; you must not be without money," and as he spoke he slipped into her hand a crisp bill of no mean denomination.

"What shall I say to you?" she gasped, her breath fairly taken away by such munificence.

"Nothing, dear; but"—lifting her arm and drawing it about his neck—"if you can think of anything that I would like you may give it to me," and he bent his lips to hers.

She kissed him twice—softly, lingeringly, gratefully.

"Do you love me, Salome?" he asked, just to hear what her answer would be.

"You know that I do, with my whole soul, my husband," she breathed. "Oh, I am afraid that I am too happy."

He laughed softly. Then he said:

"Now, I have something else to tell you. There is a pair of pretty bay ponies and a coupé out in the stable, and they are for the use of Mrs. Winthrop exclusively. You are to drive every fine day, Salome—you know I cannot always go with you—and order them whenever you wish. There! I shall have to go, for I hear that arbitrary bell again. Put on one of your new gowns for dinner, dear; I want to see if I have shown good taste in my selections," and with a last fond embrace he left her.

CHAPTER VIII.

DR. WINTHROP IS SUMMARILY ARRAIGNED.

THAT same evening, just as Dr. Winthrop and his wife were ready to sit down to their dinner, they were startled by a pealing, imperative ring of the hall-bell.

A moment later the door was thrown open, there was the sound of a little commotion, and Dr. Winthrop knew —even before the servant appeared at the dining-room door, and announced "Madame Winthrop, Miss Winthrop"—that his mother and sister had arrived.

He immediately went out to greet them, followed by Salome, who longed to give them a cordial and loving welcome, although her heart had sunk heavily as they were announced, for she was in doubt as to how they would receive her.

"Why, mother!—Evelyn!" Dr. Winthrop exclaimed, as he affectionately saluted them; "this is a great surprise; we did not look for you until to-morrow."

"No, Truman; eight days, I know, is the usual time allotted to the trip; but we had very favorable winds, and arrived several hours earlier than we expected," Salome heard some one reply, in smooth, even, perfectly modulated tones, and then she caught sight of a stately, magnificently formed woman, having a proud, placid, high-bred face, crowned with a wealth of dark brown hair, in which she could not detect a trace of silver.

She calmly received her son's embrace, and returned it without the slightest exhibition of glad emotion, though her keen eyes searched his face with a critical glance and lingered there somewhat fondly.

Behind her was a tall, beautiful girl, fair as a lily, with a delicate bloom on her cheeks, eyes of turquoise blue, and features that seemed chiselled from marble,

they were so perfect. Her hair was of a beautiful red-gold tint, and was coiled in a graceful knot at the back of her fine head.

Salome thought her lovely, and her heart went out to her with affectionate longing, especially when she saw her throw her arms about her brother's neck and kiss him heartily on the lips.

"How glad I am to see you, dear boy!" she cried. "It seems an age since we went away, doesn't it? Are you well—and aren't you delighted to see us home again?"

"One question at a time, Evelyn," laughingly exclaimed Dr. Winthrop. "But of course I shall say yes to every one, while it behooves me to compliment you upon your blooming appearance."

But he glanced behind him as he spoke, looking for Salome. They had avoided all mention of his wife—they appeared to ignore the fact that he was married, and he was secretly hurt and annoyed by the fact.

But he was too proud to betray it, while he proved himself entirely equal to the trying occasion.

"And now," he continued, stepping back and reaching out his hand to Salome, "allow me to present you to my wife—to your daughter and sister. Mother, Evelyn, this is Salome."

Instantly two pairs of keen, critical eyes were glancing over the young bride, taking in, in one comprehensive sweep, every detail of her appearance—her toilet and bearing.

She was very beautiful as she stood there beneath the brilliant light of the hall chandelier.

She had, in compliance with her husband's request, put on one of her new costumes—a rich black lace made over crimson silk—and fastened a cluster of white roses in her corsage.

Her pure, cream-like complexion contrasted beautifully with the black and crimson; her hair was very tastefully arranged, while excitement had slightly flushed her cheeks and sent an unusual brilliancy into her dark eyes.

She came forward at her husband's gesture, with a graceful step and bearing.

"You are very welcome," she said sweetly, as she extended her hand, first to Madame Winthrop, then to her daughter. "I only regret that we did not know of your arrival, so that the doctor could go to meet you."

She yearned to embrace them—to claim them then and there as "mother," and "sister:" but, of course, she knew that such advances must come from them—that it would be out of place for her to take the initiative, and she was bitterly disappointed and hurt when they simply clasped her hand for an instant, in a dignified and formal, though perfectly courteous manner, and then dropped it.

Dr. Winthrop saw the light die out of her lovely eyes at this cool reception, and his right hand suddenly clenched with the feeling of hot displeasure and resentment that swept over him. But by no other sign did he betray that he understood their attitude toward his wife.

He saw, however, that they were impressed by Salome's beauty—that they could find no fault with her manner and bearing; but, all the same, he knew that they did not intend to commit themselves to her in any way, until they should become acquainted with her whole history.

Their greeting had been perfectly courteous—there could be no fault found with it on the score of politeness. It was strictly in accordance with all accepted forms of etiquette and the dignity of a Winthrop; and if the girl should prove to be worthy, in point of birth and position, to be received as a daughter and sister of the house, it would be easy enough, later, to open their arms more cordially to her. But if, on the other hand, they found that she was not all that was desirable in a mate for the wealthy and aristocratic scion of the Winthrops, they could still keep her at a distance without compromising themselves in any way, or having anything to regret.

Salome also was quick to discern all this, but, though she was deeply hurt, she was Truman Winthrop's wife and the mistress of his home, and it behooved her, for his sake, to receive his friends in a proper manner, without regard to her own feelings.

With inimitable tact and grace she ignored their formal

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greeting and, lifting a smiling face to them, said, with charming hospitality:

"Dear Madame and Miss Winthrop, you must be weary from your voyage—let me call my maid to assist in removing your wraps; then, as dinner is ready, will you not waive all ceremony and come at once to the table with us, and not wait to make your toilet?" and she touched an electric button near her, while she spoke, to summon Nellie.

Dr. Winthrop shot a look of grateful pride and love at her, and she felt more than repaid for the effort that she had made to overcome her wounded feelings.

Madame Winthrop, however, never allowed herself to be outdone or taken unaware; and, as Nellie appeared upon the scene, she calmly unfastened her wrap, remarking with cool courtesy:

"Thank you, Mrs. Winthrop, but we knew my son's dinner hour, and came prepared to dine with him," and as their wraps were given into the hands of the maid, Salome saw that they were in full dinner dress.

But her blood tingled to her finger-tips at those last significant words, "to dine with him."

Her spirit rose, however, to meet even this unlooked-for rebuff to her gracious hospitality, and with perfect self-possession she responded:

"Ah! then as dinner is served, perhaps you will come directly to the table. Dr. Winthrop, will you take your mother in?"

She turned and led the way, motioning to the butler to place two more chairs, then she deliberately took her own place at the head of the table—although she did not doubt that Madame Winthrop had been accustomed to sit there. But her husband had told her that she was mistress of his home, and she did not intend to relinquish her position to any one—she would at least show him that she was fitted to reign there as such.

She knew that her guests were watching with critical eyes every movement, and the fact only incited her to do her best.

Her manners were perfect, and her husband's eye often

met hers with a gleam of pleasure and encouragement, while he was secretly exulting over the beautiful picture which she made, sitting so calmly, like a little queen upon her throne. She chatted easily and brightly, introducing congenial and timely subjects if the conversation lagged in the least, and bore herself throughout the meal with such charming dignity that the two women began to believe that she must belong to some good family, and to congratulate themselves that their idolized son and brother had chosen wisely and creditably, in spite of their fears, even if he had disappointed previous expectations.

Still they were far too wary to commit themselves—they continued to be guardedly courteous, intrenching themselves behind a polite reserve that might be safely dispensed with or augmented, as the case might require.

After dinner all repaired to the library, where the conversation was chiefly monopolized by madam and her daughter, although Dr. Winthrop endeavored several times to draw Salome into it.

She always pleasantly responded to his efforts—said all that politeness required of her and then gave way to their guests again. Not once during the evening, however, did either woman address her directly, and yet they were so adroit in this avoidance that no disinterested observer could have regarded it as an intentional slight.

But Dr. Winthrop and Salome both knew that it was intentional—both felt that she would never be received upon an equal footing until they could be satisfied as to her birth and position.

It aroused all the young wife's spirit, and she told herself:

"I am glad now that True does not know—that something has happened every time I have tried to tell him my history and"—with a sense of the ludicrousness of the situation stealing over her—"there will be a scene, by and by, when they take him to task and he is obliged to say he does not know anything about me."

"Salome," said Dr. Winthrop, breaking in on these reflections, "do you feel able to give us a little music?"

"Certainly, if you wish, and it will be agreeable to—our friends," she responded obligingly.

Both ladies bowed with polite toleration; and Salome, her eyes gleaming very brightly, went to the piano and began to play.

They were evidently astonished at her proficiency, for, more than once, Dr. Winthrop detected them in the interchange of significant glances.

Still they awarded her no thanks, spoke no word of commendation when she ceased. Madame Winthrop made some general remark about the beauty of Mendelssohn's "Songs without Words"—a selection from which Salome had rendered most exquisitely—and then changed the subject.

The young wife began to feel as if her strength would not hold out much longer—as if the long evening would never end; but at ten o'clock madam signified her desire to retire, and Salome rang for Nellie to attend her—she had previously given orders that rooms should be prepared for their guests.

Of course, in the presence of a servant there could only be a formal exchange of "good-nights," and these being soon over, Madame and Miss Winthrop went upstairs together.

As the door closed after them Dr. Winthrop turned and drew his young wife close to his heart.

"Salome, this has been a trying ordeal for you," he said tenderly, "but you have passed it nobly—I was very proud of my wife to-night."

"I am glad if I have pleased you, True," she murmured wearily, and she was pale and drooping now, for all her false strength had deserted her; "but oh! I did hope that they would love me, for your sake," and she hid her face upon his shoulder with a little sob of grief.

"Patience, dear, have patience and all will come right in the end," he returned soothingly, as he stroked her head with a tender hand. "You can readily see," he continued, "that my mother is a very proud woman, and she is naturally somewhat piqued because her favorite son should have presumed to take so important a step as

to marry during her absence, and without even consulting her upon the subject; so she cannot make up her mind to forgive me all at once."

How good he was to assume that his mother's displeasure was directed entirely against him; but it did not deceive Salome, and she knew that she alone had come under the ban of her disapprobation.

She would not say anything to wound him, however, and she resolved to do everything in her power to make friends with their guests, for his sake; she would bear everything, brave everything, rather than that he should suffer through her. But a sigh of deep regret escaped her, for she could not quite conceal the pain in her heart.

"Poor little woman!" said her husband tenderly, "you are tired out, and no wonder. So say good-night here, and go to bed at once, for I have a letter to write before I sleep."

He raised her face and kissed her fondly; then, opening the door for her, watched her as she went slowly upstairs, a proud gleam in his eyes.

"My peerless little wife!" he murmured, as he went to his desk, "you have conducted yourself like a veritable queen to-night. If they can resist your sweetness and beauty, more shame to them. They shall receive her as she deserves," he sternly added, "or I will repudiate them; such senseless pride of position is beneath all true men and women."

He sat down to his desk to write his letter, and was just in the midst of it when there came a rap on the door.

He opened it, and found his mother standing outside, with an expression on her face which plainly indicated that she intended to sift matters matrimonial to the bottom, before she slept that night.

"Ah, Truman," she said, "I thought I should find you here. Can I have a little conversation with you?"

"Certainly, mother. Come in, and sit down," he said gravely, as he rolled a chair forward for her, and then seated himself opposite and waited for her to broach the dreadful subject.

"Of course you can surmise what I have come to talk

about," she began—"your wife. Who is she? where did you find her, and what is the meaning of this sudden marriage, concerning which you have not thought it necessary to consult or inform any member of your family, except by a brief cable message and a letter almost as brief?"

"Well, mother, you have arraigned me as if I were a culprit, and you my judge," he returned, with some displeasure in his tone. "But in reply to your first question, 'Who is my wife?'—the simple fact that she is my wife and a lady should be sufficient cause for you to receive her with becoming cordiality."

"You well know that fact alone is not sufficient to satisfy any one in a position like ours," retorted Madame Winthrop, with considerable spirit. "What was her name? Who are her family?"

"Her name was Salome Howland. Concerning her family, she has none—she is an orphan," replied Dr. Winthrop, with dignity. He blamed himself now for not having allowed Salome to tell him her history when she was so anxious to do so, for then, perhaps, he could have smoothed the way for her reception by his family, while now the very fact that he would be obliged to confess his ignorance of it would prejudice them against her still more.

Madam closed her lips tightly, and there was an ominous glitter in her eyes at his reply.

"Howland! Howland!" she repeated thoughtfully; "I wonder if she could have belonged to the Howlands of Albany—they are all right. Who was her family? Where did they reside?"

"I do not know," Dr. Winthrop quietly answered.

"You do not know!" his mother exclaimed, aghast. "Where did you find her? she inquired, while she sat erect, her face pale with mingled mortification and wrath.

"In the City Hospital in Boston."

"What! a poor charity-patient from a city hospital your wife!" cried madam, almost breathless from the shock of such an astonishing revelation.

"Not at all, mother," replied her son calmly. "She

was, instead, one of the most efficient nurses in the institution."

"Worse and worse! Heavens! a nurse of the scum of a city! And you dared to marry such a creature!" she gasped, fairly livid with rage now. "We are disgraced forever!"

"Nonsense, mother," Dr. Winthrop severely returned, his own face white to the lips. Had she been any other than his mother he would not have submitted to the insult. "Such pride of family and position is unworthy of any one. You very well know that the Rev. Dr. Eckhart's beautiful and accomplished daughter went into one of our hospitals to study medicine and to be trained as a nurse, that she might be more useful in the work which she had chosen, and no one had anything to say of her but the highest praise."

"Yes; but she was going to India as the wife of a missionary; besides, Miss Eckhart's position was unassailable—she was a lady," retorted madam.

"And my wife is also a lady," Dr. Winthrop said, deeply displeased. "Have you not seen it? Did she not conduct herself as such this evening?"

"She received us very courteously," madam reluctantly conceded.

Her companion flushed hotly.

"Could you find any fault with either her appearance, her manner, or her language? Did you discover a single point which you could criticise?" he demanded, determined to make her acknowledge Salome's virtues.

"No, perhaps not, but——"

"There can be no perhaps about the question," he interposed. "She is beautiful, cultivated, refined, a lady in every sense of the word, and she has the deepest love and devotion of my heart—which you well know is saying a great deal, as I have never been accounted a susceptible young man where ladies were concerned. But listen, and you shall learn how I came to love her so, and if even your proud heart is not softened and drawn toward her, without regard to her previous history or position, you are more callous than I shall like to believe."

Before he could go on, the door behind him opened, and Evelyn Winthrop entered the room.

"Forgive me for intruding, True," she said, "but I heard voices, and I knew you must be telling mamma the story of your romantic marriage. I am dying to know all about it, too, so I stole down. I did not think you would mind."

"No," Dr. Winthrop replied, his lip curling slightly, "it may as well be told once for all, and the sooner it is over, and your attitude toward my wife determined, the better it will suit me. But," with a stern, resolute look, "let me tell you this—whatever stand you take with reference to her, you will include me in it; if you receive her cordially as a daughter and sister, well and good; if you repudiate her—I shall repudiate you!"

CHAPTER IX.

MADAME WINTHROP REFUSES TO RECEIVE SALOME AS A DAUGHTER.

"I AM sure, Truman, you need not get so excited," Madame Winthrop remarked, in a more subdued tone than she had hitherto used, and flushing vividly; "no one wishes to repudiate your wife, as you express it, if she is all that she should be."

"There is no if about it," Dr. Winthrop interposed, in an ominously quiet tone; "she is my wife, and that entitles her to proper courtesy without regard to any conditions. But I was about to relate how I became acquainted with Salome, and why I married her. As you know, I was intending to join you abroad last fall, when we were all to go to Berlin to make the acquaintance of the Rochesters. But owing to the epidemic which broke out here, I was obliged to give up the trip for a time. Then I received a letter from my classmate, Dr. Cutler, reminding me of my promise to join him in Boston, to investigate the manner of conducting the different hospitals, and the treatment of certain cases in which we are specially interested. As he was at liberty then, and might not be again for some time, I felt obliged to go and to postpone my trip abroad until later, as I wrote to you.

"I arrived in Boston late one terribly stormy evening, but upon going to a hotel found it full; there was only one room to be had—a small one that had once been used as a store-room, and which could only be heated by a coal stove. It was too stormy for me to go out again, and so I decided to put up with such accommodations as I could get. I ordered a fire to be made in the room, so that it might be comfortably warm by the time I had eaten my supper. Then, wearied out with my long, cold journey,

I determined to go at once to bed. I found my room small, but comfortable, and having carefully arranged the damper in the pipe of the stove so that the gas would escape up the chimney, and opened the door so that I might have good ventilation, I retired. By some means, however, the damper became closed during the night—you can easily imagine with what result—the room gradually filled with carbonic acid gas, and I became asphyxiated."

"O True!" cried Evelyn Winthrop in a tone of horror, while his mother's face grew deadly white at this startling statement.

"I was found the next morning in an almost dying condition, and the hotel being near the City Hospital I was, fortunately, taken thither for treatment.

"There everything that could be thought of to resuscitate me was tried; but I was too far gone for ordinary remedies to have any effect, and as a last resort the head physician suggested the transfusion of blood. But even this seemed likely to fail, as no one could be found who was willing to have his veins opened to supply the necessary blood. Dr. Hunt grew nearly frantic and also indignant. He said he would gladly have supplied it from his own veins only there was no one else in the hospital whom he could trust to perform the operation. But just as he began to fear that he must give up the experiment and let me die, one of the nurses from the women's department made her appearance. He told her his dilemma and she instantly said:

"'I will serve you, Dr. Hunt; take as much blood from my veins as you need.' He hesitated at first, for she was not quite as robust as he desired; but it was a question of life or death for me; and when she saw me lying there breathing my life away, she begged that he would not delay. He did not. All necessary arrangements were soon made, and that noble girl lay calmly down upon the cot prepared for her; the surgeon opened a vein in one of her arms, another in mine, and, with an instrument made expressly for that purpose, transferred all that he dared of her life-blood to my veins.

"I do not wonder that you grow pale, mother," Dr.

Winthrop interposed, as Mrs. Winthrop gasped for breath and seemed greatly excited, "for I was very near death's door; but the experiment proved a success. That brave girl's blood was pure and strong, and it sustained and strengthened the little life there was in me; consciousness returned, and with it the ability to take nourishment and I was saved."

"My son! my son! and I never knew it—you never let us know!" exclaimed madam, with white lips, for, undemonstrative as she was, she idolized this son, the first-born of her twin boys.

"No," he replied; "you were in Europe; it could have done no good to tell you; and before you could possibly have reached me I was out of danger. Of course, as soon as I was able to realize anything, my first thought was one of gratitude and a desire to express it to that heroic girl who had sacrificed so much for me. But she was very ill. She did not rally, nor did her blood replenish as rapidly as Dr. Hunt had hoped and expected. The fact was, he had robbed her of more of her life-current than she could well spare. As soon as she was able to see me, however, I went to her, and instead of finding some common, middle-aged person, as I had expected, I found —Salome—that delicate, refined, and beautiful girl, who was no more fitted than you or Evelyn to be a nurse for the class of people who are carried to such a hospital. But the force of adverse circumstances had driven her to the necessity of doing something for her own support, and she had chosen nursing.

"The moment I saw her I was unaccountably drawn to her, for I found her as cultivated in mind as she was beautiful in person. The second time I visited her I knew that I could never love any other woman; and so, when I found that she was likely to be delicate for a long time on account of the sacrifice she had made for me, I resolved to win her for my wife, if I could."

"How could you, Truman, when you were pledged to another?" his mother reproachfully demanded.

Dr. Winthrop flushed hotly at this charge, and his brow clouded.

"I was not really pledged to Miss Rochester," he began.

"You were!" excitedly interrupted the proud woman opposite him. "You promised your Uncle Milton, when he was on his death-bed, that you would marry the daughter of his friend; it was with that understanding that he willed you his magnificent fortune; and now you will have to forfeit it all. Oh, it breaks my heart to think of it!"

And truly madam did appear to be greatly distressed.

"You forget, mother, that my promise to Uncle Milton Hamilton was conditional," Dr. Winthrop answered. "I pledged myself to meet this young lady, Miss Rochester, and if we proved to be congenial, if we could love each other, then I would willingly marry her, and thus comply with the terms of the 'R—H.' will."

"Well, you have never met her; you do not know whether you are congenial or not; and you have not only lost Milton Hamilton's magnificent fortune, but the one you would also have won with Sadie Rochester. More than this, the union would have been unexceptional in every way. The Rochesters belong to one of the oldest and finest families in the State; and I have heard that Sadie Rochester is a very beautiful and accomplished girl. I cannot be reconciled to it," groaned Madame Winthrop, in conclusion.

"Mother, be reasonable, and accept the inevitable. Fate, or Providence, interfered with my proposed meeting with Miss Rochester—sent me to Boston instead of to Europe, and decreed that I should meet and love Salome instead."

"But you need not have been so hasty about your marriage. Who knows but you might have been better pleased with Sadie Rochester if you had only waited," Madame Winthrop irritably retorted.

Dr. Winthrop made an impatient movement.

"Mother," he said, sternly, after a moment of thought, "after I had seen Salome Howland three times I knew that neither Sadie Rochester nor any other woman could ever be my wife. My whole heart and soul were filled with profoundest love for this girl who had saved my

life. If she had refused to marry me I should never have married any one. You charge me with having been hasty. Well, perhaps others would judge me so also; but Salome was ill—Dr. Hunt feared that she would be for a long time—he was afraid of atrophy of the heart. She had no friends, no home; he wanted to get her away from that hospital, and she had nowhere to go and no one to care for her. You know that I am not, have never been, an impulsive man, therefore I was not guided simply by impulse in this very critical decision of my life in determining to make this lovely girl my wife. I loved her; I wanted her. I believed that with proper care she should get well; but I knew that she must be relieved from all care, all anxiety regarding herself—that she must be taken away from that place and from all exciting scenes, where she would be happy and surrounded by tenderness and love. Something—some look or gesture—which I remarked one day when I was with her, made me believe that she might learn to love me, if already she did not. I told her that I wished to make her my wife, and asked her if she would marry me. She demurred at first, and I thought she feared I was only asking her from a feeling of pity and of gratitude for what she had done for me. But I knew that she loved me, from the look of sudden joy that flashed over her pale face and into her eyes, and I was determined that nothing should separate us after that."

"You were very rash and inconsiderate to take such a step without investigating her antecedents," Madame Winthrop here interposed.

"She spoke of that very thing," Dr. Winthrop replied. "She wanted to tell me everything about herself, for she said she had nothing to conceal from me, only she had had trouble that had obliged her to depend upon her own resources. But she was so frail—it excited her so to talk about it, that I would not allow her to speak of it; and mother, I know that she is a lady—that there is nothing connected with her life that can cast even a shadow upon either her future or mine," the young physician confidently concluded.

"But she is getting well and strong now—there certainly has been time since your marriage for her to tell you all her previous history," said Miss Winthrop eagerly.

"Yes, and she has attempted to do so two or three times during the last week; but our conversation has been interrupted each time. But," lifting his head proudly, a tender smile upon his lips, "even if she never tells me anything I can trust her; she is one of the purest, truest little women in the world. She has been well educated—well-bred; she is an honor to me as a wife—to you as a daughter and sister."

"I shall never be content until I know her history, and if you are so foolish, so indifferent, as not to care anything about it, I shall take the first opportunity to inquire into her genealogy," Mrs. Winthrop resolutely remarked.

"Pardon me, mother," her son began as resolutely, "but I must insist that you do nothing of the kind. Salome is sensitive—very delicately made—and you would wound her exceedingly by seeking to pry into her family affairs. When she has an opportunity to confide in me I will acquaint you with all that is necessary for you to know. But I cannot allow her to be questioned or excited in any way, for she is far from strong even now, and I shall have to be very careful of her for a long time to come. She has improved wonderfully, however, since I brought her home, and if she has nothing to cause a relapse, I am sure that she will soon be entirely out of danger. Mother, Evelyn"—turning an appealing glance upon them—"why will you not receive my wife in a motherly and sisterly way? Give her love and kindness, and I know that she will prove all that you can desire in a daughter and sister."

"How have your friends here in New York received the news of your astonishing marriage?" questioned Madame Winthrop, without paying any heed to his appeal.

"I doubt if half a dozen people in the city know that I am married," replied the young doctor. "I have been so busy since my return that I have met scarcely any one whom we visit, and Salome has been so delicate that I

have not thought best to send any cards. But you have not yet told me whether you intend to be upon friendly terms with my wife," he concluded, persistently.

"Truman, I cannot be reconciled to this marriage. Just think what she has cost, what it involves, and all the peculiar circumstances attending it?" Madame Winthrop sternly remarked.

"I suppose if I had married Miss Rochester, under exactly the same circumstances, you could have been easily reconciled to the peculiarity of the situation," Dr. Winthrop observed, with quiet scorn.

"Of course; for you were pledged to her, and we know all about her family; while—oh, True! it has been the dream of my life to see those two estates—Brookside and Englehurst—united," sighed Madame Winthrop dolefully.

"There is something more to be desired in life than the union of two estates, valuable as they may be," returned the young man, gravely. "It was an arbitrary and unnatural will that both Uncle Milton and Mr. Rochester made; it is simply absurd for one generation to imagine that it can control the affections of the one following, and settle its domestic relations according to its own notions. I know that Milton Hamilton was fond of me; no doubt he fondly imagined that I should fall in love with Sadie Rochester, and everything would move smoothly along, as he and her father had planned. But I believe if he could speak to-day he would say that he would prefer me to have his fortune, even though I have not married as he wished, than to have it go in another direction. But that is all past; the die is cast; having once seen and loved Salome, I could never love or marry any other woman, were forty fortunes in the balance; so, if you please, we will not discuss that point any further."

"I cannot believe that you are so infatuated with the girl as you pretend to be," his mother exclaimed excitedly. "I believe that you were actuated more by motives of pity and gratitude than love. Tell me—am I not right? Can you honestly say that you were not governed by those feelings?"

"No, I cannot say that," he responded thoughtfully, "for gratitude did actuate me in a measure—it was profound gratitude for the noble sacrifice of her life-blood, that led me to seek her in the first place, and I felt that I owed her a debt which I could only repay by devoting my life to her; but love was the strongest motive of all; she had won my whole heart before I offered her my hand."

Madame Winthrop's eyes snapped angrily at this assertion, but she did not pursue that train any further.

"Well, what are you going to do about the fortune that you have forfeited—have you given any consideration to that important subject?" she sharply demanded.

"Yes, I believe I have fully considered the matter, and I am prepared to fulfil the conditions of the will, to the letter," Dr. Winthrop gravely returned.

"What conditions?" demanded Evelyn. "I imagined that the fortune, all except the estate at Englehurst, was given to you for your name."

"The will, Evelyn, was made when I was a mere boy; if Uncle Milton had lived longer, I do not believe he would have imposed any such conditions upon me," her brother returned. "These conditions were—if I obeyed his wish, and married the daughter of his friend, I was to have the whole of his fortune; if I refused to do this, and married any one else, I was to surrender all right and title to Englehurst, together with a hundred thousand dollars, to found an institution for the blind, in connection with Brookside, and a like amount, according to the stipulations of Mr. Rochester's will. The only portion I was to receive unconditionally was this house and its contents."

"One could almost believe that the two men were a pair of lunatics," said Evelyn, somewhat impatiently, "and yet I imagine that, had I been in your place, I should not have been long in deciding to take a couple of splendid fortunes, and Sadie Rochester as a bride, in preference to a common nurse, without a penny. Frankly, True, I think you were a fool."

"Your frankness is, to say the least, rather lacking in

courtesy," her brother replied, with a curling lip. "But I am prepared to surrender Englehurst, and the money also, as soon as I can make arrangements to do so. I do not begrudge it, for this home, together with the handsome income which my practice will give me, will be ample for all my own and my wife's needs."

"And have you no regret for what you thus compel Sadie Rochester to lose also?" questioned his mother excitedly.

"I shall write to Mr. Rochester immediately—I ought to have done so before this—telling him what I have done, and no doubt he will make a new will, and provide handsomely for his daughter. By the way," Dr. Winthrop added, "I have had no reply to the letter I wrote to him early last fall, telling him that I intended to go abroad, with the intention of meeting Miss Rochester. Did you ever meet any of the family in your travels?"

"No; we were waiting for you to join us before going to Berlin, and now I feel as if I never wish to meet them," returned madam, with more passion in her tone than she had yet exhibited."

She arose as she spoke, and then added:

"It is late, and time that we were all in bed. Come, Evelyn."

"Wait, mother, one moment," said Dr. Winthrop, looking white and stern. "Is it peace or war upon this question? If you cannot be at peace with my wife, it will have to be war with me," he concluded, in a tone which, she had long ago learned, meant a great deal.

But she was too angry and upset to be very reasonable.

"Find out who your wife is, and then I will answer you," and with that curt reply she sailed majestically from the room, followed by her daughter.

The young physician was in no enviable frame of mind, for he knew that, with such an ungracious disposition, his mother and sister would have it in their power to make it very uncomfortable for Salome.

He sat with a thoughtful look on his face for a few moments, then he lifted his fine head with a haughty air.

"Let them do as they will," he said sternly, "Salome

is my wife; that is a fact that cannot be contested, and she will be received, wherever I am received, with becoming courtesy, or my friends will get the cut direct from me. Dear child, how nobly she conducted herself to-night!"

CHAPTER X.

DR. WINTHROP RECEIVES AN IMPERATIVE SUMMONS ABROAD.

WHEN Salome awoke the next morning, she was conscious of a feeling of great nervousness and depression. Her head ached, her temples throbbed, and she felt both languid and weak.

Under ordinary circumstances she would have remained quietly in bed, sent word to her husband that she was ill, and asked him to excuse her from breakfast.

But she knew how desirous he was that she should please his mother and sister, and win their approval, and she resolved to conquer her ill-feelings, and go down to greet them with all the cordiality and hospitality that the most exacting could expect.

She dressed herself, with great care, in a beautiful morning robe of pale pink cashmere, and looked every inch a lady as she went down, to brave again the critical judgment of her proud mother-in-law and her equally proud daughter.

Dr. Winthrop heard her light step upon the stairs, and came from the library, where he had been waiting to meet her.

His eyes lighted with love and pride as he caught sight of her; she was very lovely, and he wondered how any one could feel aught but pleasure in her presence.

"How beautiful you are this morning, my Peace! Did you sleep well, and are you feeling quite well?" he inquired, as he folded his arm about her, and looked fondly into her eyes.

"Yes, I slept very soundly," Salome answered—too soundly, she might have told him, and that was, doubtless, one cause of her headache; for she had been wearied

out with the unusual exertion and excitement of the previous evening.

But she tried to smile brightly, for she did not wish him to be troubled upon her account, and then, hearing Madame Winthrop's door open in the hall above, he drew her quietly within the library, and nothing more was said about her feelings for which she was thankful.

Madame made her appearance a moment later, with even more stateliness in her manner than there had been the previous evening, her keen eyes taking in with one sweeping glance the dainty loveliness of her son's wife, and noting that her beauty was no less striking by daylight than it had been by gaslight.

Salome went forward and greeted her with a cordial "good-morning," inquring if she had rested well, and found everything comfortable in her room.

Madam responded courteously, as any well-bred lady would have done to a stranger, in whose home she had been entertained, for surely she was not going to be outdone in politeness by one whom she affected to despise on account of inferior birth and breeding.

Evelyn soon followed her mother, and her envy was instantly aroused as she realized how exceedingly beautiful Salome was.

She had always been accounted very handsome, but she saw that she was far less attractive than her brother's wife, and a feeling of bitterness and ill-will sprang up in her heart on account of it.

She saluted Salome with decided coolness, and then, ignoring her presence altogether, began talking with her brother about some of their New York friends.

In spite of this undercurrent of dislike and disapprobation on the part of their guests, breakfast passed off quite smoothly, for Salome was determined that there should be no pains spared upon her part to keep the peace and make everything as pleasant as possible. She was the mistress of Dr. Winthrop's home and she would try to do her duty faithfully, even though she was well aware that her nerves could not long endure such a strain.

The meal was finally ended, and they were all about

to return to the library, when a servant entered and handed Dr. Winthrop a telegram.

He read it, and a startled look instantly overspread his features.

Salome observed it, and her own face grew pale with an instinctive feeling of impending evil.

"That is a cable message, is it not, Truman?" inquired his mother, who had also been regarding him keenly. "Is there any ill news from your father or brother?"

"Yes, father is very ill," Dr. Winthrop replied, thinking it best to conceal nothing. "The message is from Norman and reads thus: 'Father taken suddenly and violently ill. Peritonitis. Come if possible.'"

Salome's heart sank like lead in her bosom as she listened to this peremptory summons.

If he went would he take her with him, or would he think it best for her to remain quietly at home? If so, would his mother and sister have to be her guests during his absence? How could she bear the separation from him—how could she live under such unnatural constraint with these two women for long weeks, and perhaps even months?

Thoughts like these darted quickly through her brain during the minute that elapsed before madam could gather her wits, after the shock of hearing the message read.

She, too, had grown somewhat pale, but she did not lose one iota of her self-possession over the serious news.

"How very unfortunate, and we have but just arrived!" she said at length. "I can never endure another voyage so soon. Can you go to your father, Truman?"

"I must, since I am sent for, although I doubt if I can reach London in season to be of any service, for the crisis will have been reached and passed before I could land. However, if he should weather it safely, I may be able to prevent a relapse and add to his comfort during his convalescence. Let me see when I can go," he added, taking up the morning paper and turning to the steamship advertisements. "Ah, this is favorable; the *Scythia* sails to-day at one o'clock; so I can go at once—there will be no delay."

But his eyes wandered wistfully to Salome's pale face as he said this.

"You will take me, True?" she pleaded, in a low, eager tone, but instinctively knowing that he would not, even as she spoke.

The intensely appealing look in her dark eyes smote him keenly, for he dared not take her on such a journey at that time of the year; besides, he hoped to be back in less than a month if all went well.

Evelyn hoped that he would take Salome out of their way, so that she and her mother could have full command of his elegant home, and command of his handsome equipages during his absence.

But madam evidently had other views upon the subject, and there was a cold glitter in her hard gray eyes as she interposed:

"An invalid wife would be rather a hindrance upon such an errand, I should imagine."

Nellie entered the room at that moment to make some inquiry of her young mistress, and Salome excused herself, ostensibly to give her personal attention to the matter, but really to get out of sight and conceal the terrible heart-ache that almost unnerved her.

"Mother," Dr. Winthrop said, as the door closed after her. "I cannot take Salome with me; it would be risking too much to allow her to cross the ocean during this cold weather; while, too, I do not know what tidings and duties may await me upon the other side. I do not think it best for either you or Evelyn to go—you could do no possible good even if you found father living. Now I have a favor to ask of you—will you remain here to keep Salome company during my absence, and will you treat her like a daughter and sister? Of course, if you cannot take her into your hearts, it will be best for me to provide you with rooms at either the Windsor or the Hoffman House, until you can have the home on Thirty-fourth Street put in order."

"It will be better for us to remain where we are," Madame Winthrop returned, with a sudden accession of

dignity, "and you may be assured that I shall render all due respect to my son's wife."

This was a somewhat ambiguous assurance, but he had to content himself with it, though a sigh of regret escaped him as he left the room to seek his wife.

She was in neither her boudoir nor her chamber, and he passed on to his room to pack his trunk for the journey thinking he would see her later.

Five minutes had not passed when there came a timid knock upon his door, and the next moment Salome glided into the room, looking like some pale, sorrowing spirit.

"True! True! you are going to take me. I can be ready in an hour; you must not leave me—I cannot stay here without you!" she panted tremulously, as she seized his arm with both hands, and looked beseechingly into his face.

He saw that she was greatly excited.

He put down the articles of clothing he was folding, and drew her into his arms.

"Salome, my dearest," he said tenderly, "I wish from the bottom of my heart that I could take you; but I cannot—hush! little woman! this will never do," as she burst into a passion of tears and hid her streaming eyes upon his breast.

He held her there close, until her grief was somewhat spent; then he gently seated her in a chair and knelt upon the floor beside her.

"It grieves me more than I can tell you, Salome, to have to leave you here," he resumed; "as much on your account as upon mine; but I know that you could never endure the rough voyage and severe weather; and, besides, I am afraid that my father will not live through this attack—he has had one before—and I may have sad duties before me on the other side. I shall go and return as soon as possible—I hope not to be absent over a month, if as long. Cannot you be content to do without me for so short a time? Do not grieve, dear, for that will make you ill, and I shall be very anxious. Try to get strong and well while I am away; drive somewhere every pleasant day, and breathe all the fresh air you can,

so that I may find roses on these cheeks when I come back."

Salome had grown gradually more quiet and composed while he was talking, and she began to realize that it would be better for her to stay where she was; that she would only add to his care and anxieties if she went with him. A month would soon pass, and she could best please him by striving to be happy and well; so she resolved to put a brave front on the parting, which somehow had almost the sadness of death in it.

She resolutely wiped away her tears and tried to smile as she lifted her face to his.

"You must think me very childish," she began—she could not suppress the sob that broke in upon the sentence; "but—it is very hard to let you go."

"And it is very hard for me to go, dear," he answered, with regretful tenderness. "Nothing but such an imperative call would tempt me to leave you. But you must not grieve—promise me that you will not grieve, or I shall not know a moment of peace for fear of losing you."

"I will try to bear it as well as I can," she returned, little thinking how difficult it would be to keep her promise; "but oh, how I shall wish the month away! Now," starting up, and determined to show him how earnestly she wished to please him, "let me help you to get ready—you have so little time, and I am quite an expert at packing."

He kissed her more fondly than he had ever done before, and thanked her with a smile; then, feeling that it might keep her mind employed, he allowed her to assist him in his preparations.

While they were thus engaged he said:

"I have asked my mother and Evelyn to remain with you during my absence, for I do not like to leave you alone in the house with the servants, while their house is not in order for their reception. But, Salome, I want you to understand that this is your home; you are mistress here, and they are simply to be your guests; only in case you should be ill my mother will see that you

have proper care, or if you need advice in any emergency she has good judgment and will give you the benefit of it."

Salome would have been much happier to have been left alone with the servants, for she knew that, with Madame Winthrop and Evelyn in the house, she would be under continual restraint; but since it was her husband's wish that they should remain, she would not make any objections to the plan.

"I will try to make everything comfortable and pleasant for them," she gravely replied.

"Thank you, dear, and you are to have everything that you need or wish for, during my absence; make free with your cheque-book—go out every day with the ponies; they need exercise, and it will do you good; only be careful not to take cold, and don't worry about anything. Write to me by every steamer, and you shall hear from me as often. There, little wife, I believe I cannot think of any more orders to give you," he concluded, with a smile; "if I do later, I will write them."

"I will try to do all that you wish," she said, but her lip quivered over the words.

"Now I think I have everything I shall need," he remarked as he closed his trunk, "and as I have a little business to do down-town before I sail, I must hurry away. I am going to say my special good-by to you here, while we are alone," he added, as he took her again into his arms, and laid her head upon his breast. "May Heaven bless and keep you, my own wife, while we are parted, and grant that we may soon be reunited."

Salome's heart was almost breaking, and filled, too, with an indefinable fear.

"True! True! how can I let you go?" she breathed, almost breaking down again, and moved by the impulse of the moment, she twined her arms about his neck, and clung to him with a strength that surprised him.

He kissed her again and again, and then put her gently from him.

"Do not come down, dear, if you would rather not," he said, thinking she might find it difficult to preserve her self-control.

"Oh, yes, I must," she said, with a pathetic little smile, which told him that she longed to be near him until the last moment.

They went downstairs together, and madam and Evelyn, hearing them, came out into the hall to make their farewells.

He took an affectionate leave of them, remarking as he did so, and with a purpose in it:

"I have told Salome that you are to be her guests while I am away, and she has assured me that she will do everything in her power to make your stay comfortable and pleasant. I have given her full authority, and you must fill the time as enjoyably as possible. Of course you will be anxious about father, but I am going to cable Norman before I start, to send you a bulletin every day until my arrival, after which I will keep you posted. Now I must go, Salome."

She sprang toward him—he folded her in a passionate embrace, kissed her on the forehead and lips, and then was gone.

Her face was wet with tears when she turned again to Madame Winthrop and Evelyn; but she looked up with a brave little smile, and asked:

"Will you kindly excuse me for half an hour? I hope I shall be quite myself again by that time."

Madam bowed coldly, and Evelyn stared rudely at her, while Salome, with an almost breaking heart, turned and fled up to her own room, to battle alone with her heavy grief.

Madam and Miss Winthrop went slowly back to the library.

"Well, mamma, this is a queer state of affairs," the young lady remarked, as she carefully closed the door, so as to prevent any one hearing their conversation.

"It is, truly," said her mother thoughtfully.

"You understand, mamma, we are to be that girl's guests, and she is to have unlimited authority," continued Miss Winthrop, with a sneer. "That means, I suppose, that she is to manage everything her own way, and to spend his money as lavishly as she chooses—and she will choose

if one can judge by the way she dresses. It means, too, that, if we wish to entertain any of our friends we are to go to her for permission; if we wish to drive, we will be expected to say, 'By your leave,' before we can have the carriage."

"Yes, Truman evidently wished us to understand that she was to be mistress here," madam thoughtfully returned, "but," with a proud uplifting of her head, and compressing her lips tightly, "a mother has certain rights in the home of her son, and I intend to assert them."

"I am just dying to know who she is, and all about her," said Evelyn, with a frown.

"And I mean to know, before Truman returns," rejoined madam resolutely, adding, "His enforced absence will give us a fine opportunity to make all the inquiries that we desire."

"Do you imagine that you will be any the wiser afterward?" inquired Evelyn, with a malicious laugh. "If I am not mistaken, the little lady has considerable spirit and dignity of her own, and she will not be easily pumped regarding her family history."

"We shall see," quietly responded her mother, but with a look in her eye that spoke volumes.

An hour later Salome reappeared, looking a little pale, but bright and smiling, having resolutely conquered her grief, or rather controlled all outward manifestations of it, and determined to show her guests all due courtesy and attention.

She was hardly seated with some pretty fancy work in her hands, when Nellie appeared, saying that the coachman wanted to know if she would drive as usual.

"Are you two ladies too weary to drive to-day?" Salome asked, turning graciously to her companions.

"Oh, no; we intended to go for a drive by and by," madam composedly responded.

"Have you any choice as to time?" inquired the young hostess.

"Yes; it would be well for us to go soon, while the sun is bright and warm."

"Then, Nellie, you may tell Dick to bring the close

double carriage in about half an hour——" Salome began, when she was interrupted by Madame Winthrop, who said authoritatively:

"No, Nellie, tell him to bring around the barouche. I never ride in a close carriage."

A tinge of pink shot into Salome's cheeks at this decided counter-order; but she said pleasantly:

"Very well. Then, Nellie, you can say to Dick that he may put the doctor's horses into the barouche and send William to drive them, while he may drive me in the coupé, as usual. True is unwilling that I should ride in the open air while the weather is so cold," she explained to her companions, as the girl withdrew.

Neither lady made any reply; but madam's lips were tightly compressed, and a frown rested upon her brow; for Salome's orders were the ones that were to be obeyed rather than hers, after all, and they had been issued with a dignity that nettled her exceedingly.

But madam was determined that she would yet assert herself, and the opportunity for a second attempt came sooner than she expected.

CHAPTER XI.

A STARTLING ENCOUNTER.

NELLIE had not been gone from the room with her message to the coachman more than ten minutes when the cook presented herself to ask whether she should serve French peas or artichokes with the lamb for dinner.

"Are you fond of artichokes?" Salome asked, turning to her husband's mother.

"Yes; but we will have peas to-day," Madame Winthrop said, addressing the girl rather than answering Salome's question.

"And will they be served with cream, marm?" the cook asked of her young mistress.

But before she could reply, the elder woman interposed:

"Of course; they are richer and nicer, and should never be served any other way."

Still the girl hesitated and glanced inquiringly at Salome.

Now, Salome could not eat cream that had been heated —although she could take it cold—therefore she had never ordered any of her vegetables to be prepared with it.

She thought at first that she would say nothing, but let the matter rest and go without her peas for once, although she was exceedingly fond of them. But the same thing was liable to occur again, and, after a moment's thought, she quietly said, but without the slightest appearance of wishing to thwart her husband's mother:

"You may serve them both ways, if you please, Bridget, for I cannot eat them with cream; and be sure to have the crumbs nicely browned for the soup."

"Yes, marm," said the woman respectfully, as she left the room.

But, once outside the door, she gave vent to a very suggestive chuckle as she remarked in a low voice:

"The young one'll be enough for her, never fear," and then she went away to the regions below, a broad grin on her Irish face.

This is but an example, however, of what Salome had to endure day after day. Her orders were countermanded, her plans continually disarranged by some whim or freak of Madame Winthrop's or Evelyn's, both becoming, as time elapsed, more and more aggressive and disagreeable.

The young wife tried to meet these trials pleasantly and patiently, but there were times when they seemed almost more than she could bear; for when she tried to please them most, they seemed to be the least satisfied.

One day they culminated in a radical assumption of authority on the part of Evelyn.

She had been bitterly envious of Salome from the first, not only on account of her exceeding beauty, but because of the lavish hand with which her brother showered favors upon her. She especially envied her the possession of her elegant coupé and handsome ponies, and upon this particular morning she insisted that she was afraid to ride after her brother's more spirited and powerful horses, and so ordered the ponies to be harnessed into the barouche for her use.

Salome's face grew blank as she listened to this cool command, for she well knew that such an arrangement would never do.

She was saved the disagreeable duty of objecting, however, by Dick, who said:

"The ponies ben't strong enough for the barouche, marm; they'd never drag it a mile over the pavements without being winded."

"You'll do as I tell you," the young lady retorted imperiously.

Dick looked confused but doggedly determined, scratched his head, and glanced inquiringly at Salome.

She disliked to oppose Evelyn, and yet she knew that her beautiful ponies would be ruined if they were made

to draw that heavy vehicle, and Miss Winthrop was not remarkably careful of horseflesh at any time.

"Right is right," she said to herself, after thinking a moment, and she made up her mind that the little bays should not be overtaxed.

"I think Dick is right, Evelyn," she said gently. "I am afraid the ponies will be injured. Suppose you take the coupé instead; you are quite welcome to it, and, if you dislike riding in a close carriage, you can lower the windows."

"Nonsense! the ponies are strong enough—it's only the man's stubbornness," retorted the girl irritably, although she knew that she was wrong. She had not thought of the barouche being too heavy for the horses when she gave the order; her only aim had been to assert herself and overreach Salome.

"Oh, no, you are mistaken; Dick is never stubborn—he is always very willing to oblige," Salome answered pleasantly, and bestowing a kind glance upon the man. Then she added, with a decision that settled the contested point at once, "Dick, if you please, you may put the ponies in the coupé for Miss Winthrop."

"Yes, marm," and with a respectful nod the man disappeared to do her bidding, but muttering, as he got out of hearing, something about the "toppin ways of high-toned upstarts."

But when the coupé came to the door, in obedience to Salome's command, Miss Winthrop haughtily informed her that she should not drive; so the young wife, rather than have the man feel that he had had his trouble for nothing, quietly donned her wraps and went herself, although she felt far from equal to the effort after the contest with her sister-in-law, and there was a look of care on her fair face that Dr. Winthrop would not have liked to see.

But she felt better on her return, and her heart was lightened somewhat by finding awaiting her a cable message, telling of her husband's safe arrival in Liverpool, and stating that a letter was on its way to her.

The daily bulletins from Norman Winthrop, previous

to this, had not been of an encouraging nature, for Mr. Winthrop was reported as being very low.

Every steamer after that brought letters from her dear one, and Salome's spirits arose.

"I will not be disheartened," she said, after reading one of those precious missives; "I will do my very best, try to be patient, and these trials will all be over in a little while."

In spite of the care which had fallen so heavily upon her since Dr. Winthrop's departure, and the continual irritation and anxiety to which she was subjected, she was growing stronger with every day and gaining flesh, and even a little color, which, previous to her illness, had never been natural to her.

But with all her sweetness and self-denial—with all her patience and ceaseless efforts to please—she found it impossible to win the slightest affection from either Madame Winthrop or her daughter.

Several times they had attempted to "pump her," as Evelyn termed it, regarding her family and her previous life; but Salome, feeling that her first confidence should be given to her husband, adroitly evaded their questions and they learned nothing.

This so angered them that they neglected no opportunity to make her feel that they regarded her as an intruder in the family. They never accompanied her anywhere in public—they never invited her to ride, or to go anywhere with them. If they had callers, she was never asked to meet them, nor did they introduce her to any one.

One day, not knowing that Evelyn had a friend calling upon her, Salome chanced to go into the drawing-room to get a book which she had left there; but on perceiving there was a stranger there, she stopped on the threshold and excused herself.

Evelyn simply stared at her with a frown, and she retreated, feeling like an intruder in her own home.

She heard the visitor exclaim, as she passed out of sight:

"Why, Evelyn, who was that beautiful girl?"

Miss Winthrop made some low-voiced reply, which

Salome did not catch, and the other voice responded, in a tone of surprise:

"What a pity! She is far too pretty to be a common seamstress!" and Salome knew that her position was repudiated—that people who called upon her husband's mother and sister were not allowed to know that Dr. Winthrop had a wife.

What their object could be in thus trying to conceal the fact, she could not understand, but she felt bitterly hurt and humiliated, and her spirit rose in rebellion against such treatment.

"It is outrageous!" she said, with blazing eyes and burning cheek, as she sped up to her own room, "and I will not submit to being so ignored. I will do my best to get so strong and well before True gets home, that he will take me into society and introduce me to these very people from whom they seem to be so anxious to keep the truth."

But she was naturally so sweet-tempered, that these feelings were soon resolutely conquered, and she continued to exert herself to be as kind and agreeable as possible to her guests.

The next morning she was bitterly disappointed not to receive her usual letter, by the steamer that had just arrived. She feared that Mr. Winthrop must be worse, and her husband had not been able to find time to write as usual.

"I shall surely get one by the next steamer," she said, and then, to divert her mind from her disappointment, she went for a drive and to do a little shopping.

She made her purchases, and, after wandering about to look at the attractive display in the store, was slowly making her way to the entrance, where her carriage waited, when some one touched her on the arm.

She turned to see who had accosted her thus, and instantly her face blanched.

A tall, awkward, powerful-looking man was standing beside her and gazing down upon her, a sinister smile of triumph lighting his coarse but not altogether ill-favored face.

"Well, pretty one, you didn't expect to met an old friend in the midst of this busy city, did you?" he asked, in loud resonant tones, which, it seemed to Salome's terrified ears, everybody about her must hear.

She was so taken aback by this unexpected encounter that she could neither speak nor move for a moment, and the man continued, as if he enjoyed the situation:

"'Pears to me you're a good way from home, Miss Salome, and you've been gone quite a while too. You see I heard that you'd skipped, and I rather imagined that you'd turn up some day in one of these big cities."

Salome had begun to recover herself somewhat during this speech, and answered, with cold dignity:

"I do not know that I am accountable to you for my movements. Allow me to pass, if you please."

He had placed himself directly in her path, and did not offer to move at her request.

"Well, well," he said, the sinister smile still upon his lips, "this is rather curt treatment for such an old friend as I am; having known you for so many years I naturally feel an interest in you, and you might be a little more civil to me, my dear."

Salome did not deign a reply, but, watching her opportunity, availed herself of a fortunate opening in the crowd of comers and goers, glided swiftly out of the store, and sped across the sidewalk to her carriage.

Dick, who was devoted to his fair young mistress, saw that something was the matter with her, for her face was still pale, and had the door open for her by the time she reached the coupé. She was securely shut within it before the man who had accosted her could make his way out of the store.

"Home! home! as quickly as you can!" panted Salome, as she sank back among the cushions, but not before she had caught a glimpse of a leering face and a pair of triumphant eyes that had been keen enough to spot her before she could get out of sight.

Salome would have been even more disturbed if she had known that her meeting with this strange man had been observed by Evelyn Winthrop.

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But such was the case.

Her attention had first been attracted by the resonant tone in which he had addressed Salome, and turning, she had been startled by the sight of the girl's pallid face. She drew a little back, so as not to be seen by her, and watched and listened.

She understood at once that this man was acquainted with Salome's past life; that this unexpected encounter terrified her, for some reason; and she determined to avail herself of this discovery, to learn, if possible, the history of her brother's wife.

There was evidently some secret connected with her past which she was very anxious to preserve; her home, too, had been, she judged, in some distant portion of the country, and the girl, for some reason, had fled from it, and was terrified and dismayed to meet one whom she had formerly known.

She followed the man as he followed Salome, and when he turned back again, after having watched her carriage out of sight, she quietly remarked:

"So you are acquainted with that person, sir. Will you be kind enough to tell me her name?"

"Well, now," he shrewdly returned, as he eyed his fair questioner from head to foot, "perhaps she might have some objections to my giving you the information you desire."

"Why?" Evelyn demanded, with more eagerness than she was aware of.

"Hum! well, for one reason, as you heard me tell her, she's a good ways from home, and—for certain other reasons—perhaps she isn't known down here in New York by the same name she was in—well, when she was at home with her folks."

Evelyn flushed; she had not supposed that the man knew she had been watching them, but it was evident he did.

"But I particularly wish to know who she is; perhaps I could make it an object to you to tell me," she returned, as she glanced down at the costly and well-filled purse in her hand.

"Perhaps you could," he answered placidly but indifferently, following her glance, "maybe you could tell me where the lady lives, she appears to be pretty well fixed, judging from the carriage that she popped into so suddenly and the pretty ring she had on."

"No. I cannot tell you that," Miss Winthrop returned, without the flutter of an eyelid over the untruth; for she had no idea of having this country boor coming to her brother's house to annoy her, "but—I have met her a number of times, and there seems to be some mystery about her that aroused my curiosity," she continued, in a confidential tone. "She calls herself Salome Howland; is that her real name?"

The man laughed a silent, amused, internal laugh that shook his broad shoulders visibly. Whether he was amused over her curiosity, or over something connected with Salome, she could not determine.

"I can answer for Salome, but Howland, I won't be quite so sure about," he said, after a moment.

"Then Howland is an assumed name?" said Miss Winthrop eagerly.

"Assumed? Hum! Well, it may belong to her for aught I know; but——"

"It isn't her real surname—that's what you mean," supplemented Evelyn as he broke off tantalizingly.

"Well, now, I don't think it would be just square to give an old friend away, do you?" he questioned evasively. "If she calls herself Salome Howland let her go so—it can't harm anybody, I'm sure."

Evelyn saw that it would be useless to press that matter any further, so she turned her artillery in another direction.

"You said she was a good way from home; where did she live?" she inquired.

"Well, it wasn't Boston, and it wasn't in San Francisco; maybe it was somewhere between the two, and maybe it wasn't," was the provoking reply.

"Stay!" commanded Miss Winthrop haughtily. "I do not wish to bandy words with you; I simply want to know who the girl is—her true name and history. If you

can and will give me the information I desire, I will pay you well for it—you may make your own terms. If you will not, upon any terms, there is no more to be said about the matter."

"Hum! make my own terms, may I? That's pretty liberal, and you seem to be quite anxious about the girl's history, it seems to me," her companion returned, as he searched her face keenly. "Now, I'd give considerable to know where I could find her; suppose you give me her address. I'll tell you her history and we'll call it square."

The proud Miss Winthrop shivered at the thought of having this coarse creature demanding entrance to her brother's residence, and compliance with his condition was not to be thought of for a moment.

That he was in some way connected with Salome's past, and most unpleasantly so, she could not doubt, after observing her sudden pallor and terror upon meeting him and her evident desire to escape from his presence, and she was consumed with curiosity to learn the secret of it all. She would cheerfully have paid a large sum to accomplish her object; but to have her brother's home invaded by such a person, while she was an inmate there, was more than her proud spirit could brook.

"I told you that I could not give you her address," she coldly replied, "but," a cunning thought coming to her, "if you will oblige me I might try and ascertain it for you."

"All right," the man answered briskly, a shrewd twinkle in his small eyes. "When you find out, just say on a postal where I can meet you—my name is W. H. Brown, and I'm stopping at the Howard—and we'll exchange confidences."

Miss Winthrop flushed to her brows at this cool proposition.

She, one of New York's darling "four hundred," asked to make an engagement at the Howard with such a creature!

She could have smitten him in the face for daring to propose such a thing, and if a look could have annihilated

him, the angry glance which she shot at him would have withered him at once.

His *sang froid*, his presumption, his insolence, astounded her.

Still she was very curious regarding the mystery which surrounded Salome, so she put a curb upon her rage and said earnestly:

"Tell me one thing—there is some mystery—something connected with the girl that is not quite open and above board, isn't there?"

"Well, miss, how strange that you should have imagined that!" the man began, a broad grin on his face, an irritating drawl in his tone.

"She, perhaps, ran away from her home for some reason, and has been living under the assumed name of Howland since her flight," Evelyn went on, without appearing to heed him, and determined to have her say out.

He laughed mockingly.

"You're pretty keen, miss, but guessing at a question isn't the safest way to settle it," he retorted. "I always like to oblige a lady, and particularly one so handsome and clever as you appear to be; but I guess we'll stick to the first proposition. When I get the girl's address, I'll shell out about the mystery, as you put it. Remember, W. H. Brown, Howard House. I'm going to be there for the next three weeks."

He turned abruptly on his heel as he ceased speaking and walked away, leaving Evelyn Winthrop crimson with mortification, anger, and baffled curiosity.

"Does the vulgar creature imagine that I would stoop to make an appointment with him?" she muttered wrathfully, but without remembering that she had already tried to bribe him to give her the information she desired. "However," she added, with a malicious smile, "I have learned enough to convince me that there is some disgraceful mystery connected with Salome. I am going directly home to acquaint mamma with what I have heard and seen, and she will decide what will be best to do about it. If that girl is some low impostor, as I fear, we must manage some way to get rid of her."

CHAPTER XII.

AN EXPLANATION DEMANDED.

MISS WINTHROP did not delay even long enough to make her purchases, but turned about and went home to report her news to her mother.

She found madam in her own room, and learned that Salome had returned about half an hour before, and gone directly to her own boudoir.

"Well, mamma, I have learned something this morning that will astonish you," Evelyn remarked, as she threw off her wraps and sank upon a chair, quivering to her finger-tips with excitement over the precious morsel of scandal she believed she had secured.

"Ah!" madam remarked placidly, but looking up interested, nevertheless. "Is anybody married, or going to be?—or maybe it is a bit of scandal."

"It may prove to be more than a bit, if we are not careful," Evelyn excitedly returned. "It's about Salome."

"Ha!" exclaimed her mother, now all on the alert, "what about her?"

"There is some deep mystery connected with the girl, just as we have thought, and there is doubtless some good reason why she has been so anxious to keep her history from us all," said Evelyn impressively.

"What do you mean?" demanded madam eagerly.

"I have learned this morning, by a lucky circumstance, that she is a runaway from her home and family, and has been sailing about under an assumed name—perhaps she even married True under a false one."

"What!" exclaimed Madame Winthrop sternly, and growing pale; "how do you know? who has told you this?"

Evelyn then related her adventures of the morning, en-

larging upon the circumstances to suit herself, vividly portraying Salome's agitated demeanor and her sudden flight, and assuming as facts what she had guessed at from her observation, and what she had inferred from the strange man's conversation.

Madame Winthrop listened to all this with a white, set face, her heart growing harder than ever toward the girl whom her son had married.

When her daughter concluded she said, in a low, icy voice:

"Well, Evelyn, this is a matter that must be cleared up. I am going to know whom my son has married and brought into a family upon whose name there has never been even the shadow of a stain. I am going to make that girl tell me her history this very hour."

"She has a good deal of spirit, mamma, and perhaps she will refuse to say anything about herself," Evelyn suggested, but secretly delighted at her mother's determination.

"She shall tell me—she shall no longer insult us with her companionship and by enshrouding herself in such mystery," was the resolute retort.

"Well, but suppose she will not, what can you do? This is her home; she is mistress here. True has made her such, and we cannot compel her to go away. Likely as not, she will tell us, if we object to associating with her, that we can take ourselves out of her way," Miss Winthrop suggested.

"She would not dare," replied her mother sternly; "and if I find your suspicions regarding her confirmed we must manage to get rid of her by strategy if no other means will avail. My son's brilliant career shall not be ruined at the outset by a scheming adventuress. I never would have believed," she continued, with a groan, "that Truman would become so infatuated as to marry any girl without investigating her family history."

"But, mamma, True would never forgive you if you should do anything to compromise his wife," said Evelyn.

"She isn't his wife if she has married him under false pretences—under a false name," retorted madam, almost

savagely. "I don't believe such a marriage would be legal," she added with a fierce gleam in her eyes. "I am determined to make her believe so, if I can; then, perhaps, she will run away from him, as she did from her own home, and that will give him a chance to get a divorce. The thought that he knows absolutely nothing about her drives me nearly wild," she despairingly concluded.

"Well, but you must remember they had only been married about a fortnight when we returned, and her health was such he would not allow her to get excited over anything; you know he said he would not have her annoyed, and forbade us to question her," remarked the younger lady.

"He had no right to compromise us in any such rash way, even if he had no pride on his own account. I am only thankful that no one in our set appears to know anything about the marriage as yet. Oh, if we could only find some way to get rid of her!" and the dark look upon the woman's face augured ill for the fair young bride.

"You can take my word for it, mamma, Salome is not one to be easily managed. Where she imagines herself to be in the right she will not be turned from her point," said Evelyn.

"How do you know? What makes you say that?"

"Why, by the way she has managed ever since we returned, for one thing. She has ruled in everything where any serious question has arisen, only, I admit, she has done it in a very quiet, adroit manner. True told her she was to be mistress here, and she has made us recognize the fact from the very first. She has very cleverly managed to ascertain our wishes and preferences, and has tried to defer to them; she has often supplemented her commands to please us, when we have objected to certain things at times, but she never countermanded previous orders."

"That is true," madam assented with firmly compressed lips.

"And about those ponies the other day," Miss Winthrop resumed; "I knew that they had been purchased expressly for her, but I did not mean that she should think

I did, and I had been aching to use them, only I wouldn't drive with her—you remember how obstinate she was, mamma!"

"But you made a mistake, Evelyn," her mother answered. "They would have been ruined if they had dragged that heavy barouche around, and Truman would have been very angry with you. You should have ordered them put into his buggy if you were bound to use them and would not go in the coupé."

"I did not think of that; but the affair proves that she will not give up her point—the tone she used to the coachman settled the matter at once," said Miss Winthrop, flushing at the remembrance of her defeat.

"Well, I will find a way to manage her," retorted her mother sharply.

Meanwhile Salome in her own room was trying to compose her quivering nerves and recover from the terrible shock she had received.

She had been very much unstrung, and when she at last reached the seclusion of her own room and knew that she had escaped all immediate danger, she was still pallid and panting from nervous excitement.

"My poor heart is not right even yet," she murmured, as she pressed her hand upon her throbbing side and realized how it was fluttering, "and I must not allow myself to become so excited. Oh! what an unfortunate meeting! I never imagined that I could meet him, of all persons, here in New York. I shall hardly dare go out again while True is away, for fear of meeting him again, and yet I promised that I would ride every day. I wish I had insisted upon telling True everything before he went away, but there was no time, he had to go in such a hurry. Oh! if he were only back and we could be alone together again!"

She fell to sobbing nervously in her exceeding loneliness.

It was so hard to have to live as she was living—to receive no sympathy nor love from her husband's mother and sister, and to have to pull all the time against an opposing current.

"Still," she went on, after a moment, while she resolutely wiped her tears, "I have nothing to really fear—that wretch can only annoy me—even if he should discover where I live. I need only keep out of his sight until my dear one comes back, when I shall tell him everything, and he will manage all that is disagreeable for me. I will not grieve. I will not get ill. I will just throw off this load that oppresses me and—trust."

She turned to her table, and taking up some work tried to interest herself in it, and to forget the occurrences of the morning.

She had been engaged thus only a few moments when there came a knock upon her door.

Thinking it must be Nellie, for no one else came to her rooms, she said "Come in," when Evelyn put her head inside the door.

Salome regarded her with some surprise, though a bright smile instantly chased the sadness from her face.

"Oh, have you come to make me a visit?" she cried, greatly pleased by what she considered a wonderful concession on the part of her proud sister-in-law. "Come in, do, and have this cozy chair; it will be very pleasant, and I was feeling a little lonely."

She looked so pretty and appealing, her sweetness was so charming, that for an instant the haughty girl's heart was touched, and she half regretted the errand that had brought her there. But the next moment her proud spirit rebelled against accepting the slightest hospitality, and she coldly responded:

"No, I am not coming in; I merely came to tell you that mamma would like to see you. She wished me to ask you to step into her room for a few moments."

Salome's face expressed surprise at such an unusual request; but she obligingly laid down her work and rose to follow. Evelyn was already half way down the hall, but she waited at the door of her mother's room until Salome entered, when she closed it and locked it. She had no intention of having this interview interrupted until the battle should be fought out to the end.

Salome wondered at such a strange proceeding, and

her heart failed her somewhat as she caught the cold, relentless look upon Madame Winthrop's face.

Then a sudden fear almost paralyzed her.

Had they received bad news from abroad?

Mr. Winthrop was improving when last they had heard of him, though she had had no letter by the last two steamers. Could any ill have befallen her husband? Oh, if anything should happen to him, there could be nothing left for her to live for!

"Sit down, Salome," said Madame Winthrop, in her iciest tones; "I have something that I wish to say to you."

Salome obeyed and mechanically seated herself in the chair that Evelyn pushed toward her, but with a strange feeling of numbness creeping over her.

"Oh!" she gasped, "has anything happened? is there anything the matter with—True?"

Madam's lips curled scornfully over the girl's excitability. She was never thrown out of her equilibrium by any tidings, good or ill.

"No, there is nothing the matter with Dr. Winthrop that I am aware of," she said coldly; then added, with a furtive glance at her victim; "you had the last letter from him, and you surely ought to be better posted than I."

"Oh, but I have not heard from him by either of the last two steamers, and you looked so grave, so strange, I feared——" faltered Salome.

"Well, I feel that I have reason to look grave; I have felt so ever since my return," said madam, with a severely injured air; "and I have finally come to the conclusion that I can no longer endure the suspense that I have suffered. I have determined to have my doubts and fears either confirmed or removed, and so have sent for you to tell me what I wish to know."

"I do not understand you," Salome replied, beginning to regain her composure, now that her fears regarding her husband were allayed, and regarding the woman wonderingly.

"I suppose you are aware of the cause of my sudden return from abroad?" observed madam.

"No, I am not," said the young wife.

"What! did not your hus—did not my son inform you why we came home in such hot haste?"

"No; how could he when he was summoned away so suddenly himself?"

"Well, then, it was because of the unexpected news of his marriage; it came in the form of a cable message to us, and like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, for we had not the remotest suspicion that he intended to be married so soon."

"So soon!" These two words somehow struck a sudden chill to the young wife's heart. They seemed to imply that he entertained thoughts of marriage before meeting her. But she put the thought away from her, and replied, deprecatingly:

"It was very sudden to—to us, as well as to you, and there was no time to send word to any one until it was over."

"Doesn't it strike you that it was a very strange marriage?" demanded Madame Winthrop.

"Yes, the circumstances attending it were very peculiar, and I was very much surprised when True asked me to be his wife," Salome answered, flushing.

"It seems that it was not so much a surprise as to prevent your ready acceptance of his quixotic proposal," sneered Evelyn vindictively.

Salome flushed crimson again at this thrust, then she grew white to her lips over the cowardly attack.

All at once she seemed to become strangely calm and self-possessed, although she did not regain her color.

"Allow me to ask," she said, addressing Madame Winthrop, and not deigning to notice Evelyn's insulting remark, "if Dr. Winthrop made you acquainted with all the circumstances leading up to our union?"

"Yes, he did," curtly responded the woman, a frown upon her brow.

Salome's face had cleared somewhat. If her husband had told his mother and sister of the romantic story of his wooing, they knew that he alone was responsible for their marriage, and they had no right to thus call her to account for having become his wife.

"Then," she said quietly, "since you know all that occurred in the City Hospital of Boston, you know just why he asked me to become his wife, and why I consented to do so, notwithstanding I had known him so short a time, and I cannot feel that you have any right to arraign me in such a manner during his absence for having married him."

Madam and Evelyn both opened their eyes in astonishment at this dignified, yet spirited response to their attack. It told them that they had a stronger and wiser spirit to cope with than they had anticipated.

There was a moment of silence, then madam broke forth with more heat than she had yet manifested:

"I should have supposed that any girl possessing proper self-respect would have hesitated to accept a proposal that must have been prompted by a feeling of gratitude. You saved my son's life—there can be no doubt about that—he was grateful; you were ill, you had no home, no friends; your physician said you must not remain under the depressing influences of a public hospital, and so a sense of honor and of the great debt he owed you prompted Dr. Winthrop to ask you to be his wife, that he might try to save your life in return for the one you had given back to him."

Salome's heart leaped with sudden pain at this cruel speech.

As we know, she had been exceedingly sensitive upon this very point, and she had only just begun to have these fears allayed by his increasing tenderness, when these two women came so rudely in upon them and he was called away to his father.

What wonder that all her former doubts began to be aroused by his mother's cruel and unprincipled assertion?

"Did Dr. Winthrop tell you that he was actuated by gratitude when he asked me to marry him?" she gravely inquired.

"He did," briefly responded Madame Winthrop, and Salome felt herself growing dizzy, and there was a ringing sound in her ears; but controlling herself by a mighty effort, she demanded:

"Did he tell you that he was prompted solely by gratitude?"

"Let me tell you what he did say," said madam, evading a direct reply to this searching question. "I charged him with having simply a feeling of pity for your forlorn condition and of gratitude for what you had done; I asked him just what you have asked me. 'Can you honestly say,' I asked, 'that gratitude did not prompt you to make her your wife?'"

"And his answer?" breathed Salome, with a wild look in her eyes, a spot of fire on each cheek.

"'No, I cannot,' he replied, 'for it was a feeling of profound gratitude for the girl's noble sacrifice of her life-blood to save me'—those were his very words, were they not, Evelyn?" madam interposed, pausing to look at her daughter.

"Yes, mamma, you have repeated them exactly as I remember them," was the unfeeling reply.

Salome felt as if the blood was turning to ice in her veins at this blighting statement.

She had begun to be so happy, so secure in her husband's love, before these people came into her home with their cold looks and unfeeling hearts, and even since his departure she had trusted him fully; but these terrible words burned themselves into her brain and stabbed her to the heart like a poisoned dagger.

"He also said," Madame Winthrop went on ruthlessly, "that the head physician told him he believed that you were not going to get well—that you ought to be removed to some pleasant home where you would be tenderly cared for, where you would feel no anxiety about yourself. My son believed that you had conceived a sudden passion for him—he said some word, look, or gesture that escaped you one day led him to believe that you loved him; and so—can't you see?—everything goes to prove that he married you from pity and gratitude."

Salome's head had gradually drooped during these garbled and shameless statements, and now she covered her burning face with her trembling hands to conceal the shame and agony that were crushing her at this last terrible charge.

Oh, it was dreadful! Could it be possible that she had betrayed all her wild love for Dr. Winthrop before he asked her to be his wife? Had she, in her weakness, been so lost to all maidenly delicacy and modesty? She tried to think—to remember when and how; but the bitter humiliation of the moment confused her utterly, and she could recall nothing.

It did not seem possible that Dr. Winthrop could be so devoid of respect and consideration as to speak of these things to another, and yet, how otherwise would his mother have known of them?

"You can imagine something of our trouble and consternation when we learned all this," madam relentlessly resumed, "when, too, we learned that he had married a woman concerning whose history and family he knew absolutely nothing, and about whom there seemed to be some strange mystery. When I demanded why he had not insisted upon having everything explained, his answer was that you were easily excited, and he feared the effect upon your health. But he promised that he would inform me regarding your history as soon as he learned it himself. He was, however, called so unexpectedly abroad that the matter was not cleared up. I had intended to be patient until his return—to trust that all would come out right in the end, and leave the matter with him to settle. But to-day I learned something which made me resolve to sift the subject to the bottom, and to demand an open confession from you. And now I ask you, Salome, who you are, what your real name is —for I have reason to doubt that Howland is such— why you have so persistently kept your husband in the dark regarding your past, and what the mystery is that surrounds you."

CHAPTER XIII.

'YOUR MARRIAGE WAS ILLEGAL; YOU ARE NO WIFE!"

SALOME had sat like a statue during this last tirade. Her heart was like lead in her bosom; her feet and hands like ice, her face, after that vivid flush of shame, pale as marble, and all the while those blighting words, which Madame Winthrop had represented as her son's, and which had been confirmed by Evelyn, rang in her ears like a sentence of doom upon her future happiness.

How could she believe them after those last fond expressions to which he had given utterance before he had parted with her in his room? when he had held her in his arms and pronounced that tender little benediction over her, "May Heaven bless and keep you, my own wife, while we are parted, and grant that we may be soon reunited." When he had seemed so anxious that she should take such good care of herself, and would "not know a moment's peace if he thought she was grieving."

And his letters since his departure had breathed so much of anxiety and affection for her; in them he had called her for the first time "his darling," "his precious wife," and entreated her over and over again to take care of herself for his sake.

Could she believe that all this was hypocrisy on his part—that he would pretend to so much affection for her, and tell his mother and sister something different?

No—she would never believe it of him. She would trust her husband—she believed him to be honorable, noble, truthful, and she would allow nothing to come between them or disturb her faith in him.

She resolved, too, that she would keep her own counsel during his absence; but upon his return she would open her whole heart to him and there should never be any

more secrets between them. But she would not be driven into any confessions to these two women, who, from the very first moment of their meeting, had constituted themselves her enemies.

She did not, however, wish to come to any open rupture with them if she could avoid it—they were her husband's mother and sister, he had wished them to remain in his house as her guests, and she felt it to be her duty to show them all due respect and consideration; but they must be made to realize that she also had certain rights—that she was not a weak reed to be bent and swayed according to every freak or whim which seized them.

All this she thought out during the brief interval of silence that followed Madame Winthrop's authoritative demand, and she suddenly found herself growing calm and self-possessed again.

"Allow me to inquire, Mrs. Winthrop, what you have learned to-day that has so embittered you against me?" she said, turning a mild glance upon the stern woman and ignoring her question regarding the mystery of her life.

"I have learned that you are not what you pretend to be—that you are an impostor——"

"Not what I pretend to be—an impostor?" repeated Salome, with wide eyes.

"Yes; you married my son under an assumed name. Girl, what is your true name? I demand an honest answer," returned madam with overwhelming authority.

"My name was just what I gave it—Salome Howland," the young wife quietly responded.

"I know better," retorted the elder woman, flushing angrily at the girl's calm self-possession. "Your first name may be Salome, but Howland was certainly not your true surname."

Salome made no reply to this, and Evelyn and her mother exchanged significant glances.

"Was it?—tell me!" commanded Madame Winthrop.

"I can tell you nothing—at present," Salome answered.

"You shall tell me; I have borne this wretched suspense as long as I can," persisted her tormenter. "Do you dare deny that there is a mystery connected with

your life? Do you dare affirm that you gave your true surname when you married my son?"

Salome thought a moment; then, lifting her small head proudly, she met madam's glance squarely and steadily.

"Mrs. Winthrop," she began, but most courteously, even gently, "I do not wish to offend you. I do not wish to say or do anything that would appear disrespectful toward my husband's mother; and I cannot tell you what you wish to know just now, simply because I have not yet confided my history to True, who has the first right to my confidences. As he told you, he would not at first allow me to talk about it, although I attempted to do so several times, because he feared it would excite and make me ill again. When I can have an opportunity to confide in him, I can then have no possible objection to your knowing all that he thinks best to tell you. I beg that you will not press this subject any further; pray let it rest. You are my guests, and I cannot bear that there should be any unpleasantness while True is away——"

"Well, then," sternly interrupted Madame Winthrop, "I am determined that I will have the truth. There is something very mysterious about you, and when you went into that hospital in Boston you went there to hide from some person or persons, did you not?"

Salome flushed a vivid scarlet at this unexpected charge, and then she as quickly lost all her color again.

"When True comes I will tell him all," she said with visible agitation.

A look of triumph leaped into madam s eyes, for she was quick to notice both flush and emotion, and regarded them as signs of guilt.

"More than this," she went on, emboldened by her apparent success in worming this evidence of a secret from her victim, "for some reason, best known to yourself, you ran away from your home, and you are a long distance from your friends."

Wholly unprepared for such an accusation, Salome threw out one hand with a startled gesture and shrank back in her chair, as if from a blow, while her beautiful face was almost convulsed with pain.

"You perceive," the woman went on, "that I know what I am talking about, and it is useless for you to attempt to deceive me; and since you will not confess it I will tell you that I also know that Howland was not your real surname. You have compromised us all by meeting a low man—a former lover, I suppose—a circumstance of which I shall write to my son immediately. You have married my son—a Winthrop—under false pretences; you have brought irreparable disgrace in more ways than one upon one of the first families of New York."

"Madam," interposed Salome, rising and standing before the irate woman, with a proud dignity that impressed her in spite of the fury to which she had wrought herself up, "you wrong me; I have brought no disgrace upon you or the name of Winthrop; I have done nothing which can reflect upon your son or your family in any way."

"You have! for—do you understand?—under the circumstances your marriage is illegal—you are no wife!"

Madame Winthrop did not know anything about the law in this case; but she was so angry—she had worked herself into such a rage over the obstinacy of the girl—that she made this statement at random, determined, if possible, to frighten Salome into confessing her whole story to her.

A look of horror suddenly shot into the young wife's eyes and over her sensitive face, which blanched to the hue of marble. She seemed almost to freeze where she stood and to shrink before those two heartless women, a terrible fear written on every quivering feature.

"No! do not tell me that!" she whispered hoarsely.

"The law decrees that no contract is binding that is obtained by fraud on the part of either party; it becomes illegal, and thus, do you not see, by being married under a name that was not your true one your marriage was invalid?" said madam impressively.

"Oh, but True believes it to have been legal; he intended that it should be. He would never have wronged me so, and I am sure he will make it all right when he comes home," Salome cried, appalled at the situation as represented to her.

"That remains to be seen," returned the elder woman severely. "My son is a man who abhors deception of any kind; he would never overlook being drawn into such a false position by fraud. More than this, he was pledged to another when, from a feeling of pity and gratitude, he asked you to be his wife."

Madame Winthrop reached the end of her rope at this point, for with one agonized gasp Salome fainted dead away. The knowledge that her husband had broken his pledge to another, perhaps thus ruining his own and the life of some lovely girl, was too much for her already overburdened heart, and a merciful unconsciousness locked her senses in temporary oblivion.

Madame Winthrop and Evelyn were both somewhat frightened by this result of their inhuman arraignment of the young wife, and so they resolved to keep all knowledge of it from the servants, if possible.

They laid her upon the lounge, loosened her clothing, and applied restoratives.

"I'm afraid we are getting ourselves into trouble, mamma," Evelyn remarked as she regarded Salome's death-like face with great anxiety. "True would never forgive us if anything should happen to her through us."

"She's an obstinate little piece," replied madam, with a frown. "I didn't think she'd hold out like this, nor go off in any such way. But," she continued relentlessly, "I'm determined to discover the secret of her life before Truman comes home. I'm almost sure there is some disgraceful story connected with her past, and, if there is, I shall wish that something might happen to her."

Evelyn regarded her mother with some surprise as she said this. She had always known that she was an intensely proud, somewhat cold-hearted woman, but she was shocked by such utter heartlessness as this.

Salome at length revived, and they helped her to her own room and called Nellie to attend her.

It can easily be imagined that she was in a wretched state mentally, while the terrible excitement to which she had been subjected made her really ill for the time.

She saw nothing more of her husband's mother and sister that day, for she shut herself in her chamber and charged Nellie not to admit any one.

She tried to calm herself sufficiently to think over what she had heard and to reason out her position. She wondered how madam could have learned all that she appeared to know about her. Could it be possible that that man had followed her home and revealed to her what he knew of her history? The thought for a moment appalled her, then she discarded it, for if such had been the case they must have learned her name and some other things which madam had seemed so anxious to extort from her.

Then her thoughts reverted to what had been told her about her marriage.

Could it be possible that there had really been any flaw in it? that the simple fact of her withholding her surname would invalidate it?

It did not seem at all reasonable; but she knew that the law was very often peculiar and arbitrary, and it might be as Mrs. Winthrop had said.

If she was no wife—horrible thought—then she had no right to be in the home of Dr. Winthrop, acting as mistress at his table, driving his horses, spending his money.

"Oh, it cannot—it cannot be true!" she moaned, as she hid her burning face in her hands. "What shall I do? what is right—what is my duty? True, True, have you ruined your life—have you ruined three lives from a mistaken sense of obligation—of gratitude to me? I would rather have died than that it should be so."

She was very wretched, both mentally and physically, and Nellie grew alarmed at her condition and begged her to send for some physician.

But she refused to see any one—she knew that no advice, no medicine, would do any good until she could fight out her battle and determine upon some course to pursue.

All night long she lay awake, trying to decide the important question; and at last in the small hours of the morning she resolved that she would write everything to

her husband, for such he still seemed to her, in spite of the doubt that had been cast upon their relations. She would begin at the very beginning, and tell him all the sad story of her life up to her meeting with him. She would also tell him of her encounter with that bad man yesterday, of her subsequent interview with his mother and sister, and their judgment of her. She would tell him that if she was no wife—if he had been pledged to some one else whom he loved and wished to marry, before meeting her, and feeling that he owed her such a return for the service which she had rendered him—if he wished to be free and to take advantage of the flaw in their marriage, she would willingly submit—she would go away and never see or trouble him again.

It was a heroic resolve—a resolve worthy a martyr; but having determined upon it, she arose and proceeded to put it into execution.

She wrote for more than an hour steadily, never faltering over a single point—she laid her whole heart and life bare before him.

"Dear, dear True," she wrote in conclusion, "it makes me utterly wretched to think that I may have ruined your life—though unintentionally—I would rather that you had left me in that cheerless hospital—left me there to die; for I should have died, I know—I could not have lived and suffered on alone after having poured my whole soul through my blood into your veins. But even such a result would have been far better than that I should have brought life-long sorrow and regret to you and yours. Oh! answer me at once, that I may not be in suspense. If you pronounce sentence upon me, I will not murmur; I will go quietly away, and you shall never know anything more of me—you shall be free. But if—can such joy be in store for me?—if you love me as I have hoped, if you wish me to remain as your wife, I shall be happy, content, and will cheerfully and joyfully await your return, trusting you fully, and pay no attention to what others may say. Pray—pray send me but one word, 'stay,' by cable, to relieve the torturing suspense of your

"SALOME."

When this lengthy epistle was finished, she sent it down by Nellie to the mail-box, so that the postman might take it on his first round, and then, with her mind greatly relieved, she threw herself again upon her bed, and was soon sleeping the sleep of exhaustion.

But Evelyn Winthrop heard Nellie as she went down with Salome's letter, and at once suspected that she had made a clean breast of everything to her husband, and appealed to him to protect her from their further persecution.

"She will make a pretty mess for us if she has told him all that has happened since he went away, and he will never forgive us," she muttered, with a frown.

She arose, early as it was, and hastily throwing on her wrapper and thrusting her feet into a pair of felt slippers, stole softly down to the vestibule to inspect the letter-box.

Yes, there was a bulky epistle addressed to her brother, as she had expected, while at that instant she heard the postman's whistle, just across the street. Evelyn was intensely curious to know what was inside that letter; if she could but master its contents and send it on by the next mail—provided there was nothing objectionable in it—no one would be any the wiser and no harm would be done.

She hastily slipped the missive from the box, thrust it into her bosom, and sped noiselessly back to her chamber, a few moments before the postman called to deliver the double mail, and, as was his custom, take what letters were ready for the post-office.

Evelyn reached her room without encountering any one, although she was mortally afraid of meeting Nellie, and after locking her door sat down before her glowing grate, where with a sharp penknife she carefully unsealed the envelope inclosing Salome's letter and drew forth its closely written contents.

The morning was very dark, for a severe storm was raging, and she found that she must have more light before she could read it.

She arose, and carelessly laid the open letter on the mantel, and then went to draw back the heavy curtains from her windows.

The several sheets of paper, which had not been thoroughly creased in the haste in which Salome had folded them, began to creep apart, and having been carelessly laid too near the edge of the mantel slipped off—would probably only have fallen to the floor had not a gust of wind at that moment increased the draft to the chimney, when the ill-fated missive was sucked directly in upon the bed of red-hot coals in the grate.

Instantly it was in flames, and when Evelyn turned to see what had caused the sudden ruddy glow in the room, it was past all hope of recovery and the blackened flakes of the consuming paper were being rapidly drawn up the chimney.

A look of consternation swept over her face as she contemplated the ruins before her, and then gave place to one of excessive anger at being foiled in her design to penetrate the mystery which seemed to surround her brother's wife.

"What an idiot I was not to be more careful," she muttered passionately as she watched, with covetous eye, the last of the fragments disappear up the black-throated chimney. "What shall I do?"

She could of course do nothing but endure her wrath and disappointment and make the best of a bad matter. She would never humble herself enough to confess to Salome or any one else what she had done, and so her only alternative was to make sure of not being detected by burning the envelope also, and then let matters adjust themselves as they would.

She was long in recovering from her wrath, and she found it no easy matter to dissemble and go down to breakfast with a serene brow and composed manner when the bell rang for that meal.

CHAPTER XIV.

SALOME RECEIVES HER SENTENCE.

MADAME WINTHROP herself did not appear to be in a very amiable frame of mind that morning, and it was evident to Evelyn that her failure to bring Salome into subjection to her demands the previous day still irritated her excessively.

"Where is your mistress?" she curtly demanded of Nellie as she entered the dining-room upon some errand.

"She is ill; she is not able to come down this morning," the girl replied.

"What is the matter?"

"I don't know, marm; but she did not sleep well last night."

So madam and her daughter breakfasted by themselves, and then withdrew to madam's room, when she revealed a plot which she had spent most of the night in concocting.

Evelyn listened aghast.

She knew that her mother was very resolute, but had never imagined that she would resort to such extremes in order to accomplish an object.

"Do you suppose you can make it work?" she asked somewhat doubtfully.

"I do not know; but of one thing I am sure—I shall never recognize that impostor as my son's wife," said madam firmly. "Scarcely any one save the servants know that Truman has brought a wife home; if we can only manage to get rid of her before he returns, I believe we could manage him about a divorce."

"What need of a divorce if the marriage was illegal?" queried Evelyn.

"I do not suppose it was really illegal, but I was so

enraged with her that I did not care much what I told her. If it would only rouse her pride, so that she would take herself away where he could never find her, I should be happy."

"But True has taken no pains to conceal his marriage. You know he drove about a great deal with her, and it is a wonder that people have not found it out. Besides, he has given her a check-book, and if she likes she can draw any amount of his money," said Evelyn.

"How do you know?" asked her mother, looking startled.

"I saw it one day when she was out driving and I was looking about her rooms. True has signed a number of blank checks, and all she need do is to fill them out with whatever amount she wishes to draw."

"We must have that book, Evelyn. It will never do to let her go to the bank and make free in any such way," madam resolutely responded.

That afternoon she sought the young wife in her own room.

She found her pale and hollow-eyed, but felt no regret for having caused her suffering.

Salome received her courteously, trying to remember only that she was her husband's mother.

"I have been thinking," the scheming woman began, as she seated herself where she could catch every varying expression of the girl's face, "that since matters seem to be in such a complicated and uncertain state, it might be as well for you to go away from here for a while—at least until Dr. Winthrop returns."

"Go away from here!" repeated Salome, astonished.

"Yes: if people and the servants should discover the situation there might ensue a very disagreeable scandal."

"I do not think I quite understand you," Salome said slowly, but her lips were livid.

"Why, if it should become known that your marriage was not legal, people would say very uncomfortable things about you, as well as about my son. We are a very proud family," madam continued pompously, "and it would be a great trial, as well as a great injury to Dr. Winthrop,

to have any scandal connected with his name. Now, Evelyn and I have talked the matter over, and we have concluded that it will be best to take you with us to our own house—shut up this house—and then you can remain somewhat secluded until my son returns, when, if he sees fit, he can have his marriage ratified, or—make any other arrangement which may seem best for him and you."

Salome felt as if she must shriek as she listened to this inhuman, insulting speech.

It was horrible to be made to feel that she was occupying such a questionable position in the home of Dr. Winthrop; while the proposition to leave it and accompany Madame Winthrop to her home, there to hide herself—thus virtually acknowledging that she believed herself to be no wife—was not to be thought of for a single instant.

She bent her head in thought for several moments, trying to decide what she should do; then she turned with an air of resolution to her companion.

"Mrs. Winthrop," she said gravely, "Dr. Winthrop brought me here as his wife—he installed me here as the mistress of his home and treated me in every respect as one upon whom he had bestowed such an honor. As his wife and the mistress of his home, I shall remain here until his return; unless I receive a message directly from him telling me to change my residence. I feel compelled to say," Salome went on, with increasing firmness, "that I consider that you have acted unkindly and officiously, both toward me and—my husband, in the course you have pursued since Dr. Winthrop went abroad, and although he wished you to remain here as my guests until his return, yet, if we cannot live more harmoniously than we have hitherto lived, I think it would be for our mutual comfort if you and Evelyn would return to your own home."

Madame Winthrop arose in high dudgeon at this plain speaking, her face almost purple from wrath.

"Am I to understand that you turn me, Dr. Winthrop's own mother, out of my son's house?" she demanded, in tones that shook with passion.

"No, madam," Salome quietly and politely responded, "I have no desire to do anything so rude as that; but I cannot continue to live as we have been living—my strength will not admit of it. If I have to endure excitement like that of the past twenty-four hours, I know it will not be long before I shall be in as critical a state as when I left Boston. I shall be only too happy to have you and your daughter remain where you are if you will desist from this persecution; otherwise, as I have no other home, I shall be forced to ask you to return to Thirty-fourth Street."

Madam stood in speechless astonishment for a moment, for she had never dreamed of any such termination to an interview which she had intended to make so humiliating. Then, it not being exactly clear to her how to meet this very resolute spirit exhibited by her son's wife, she stalked silently and majestically from the room, and Salome, left to herself, burst into a passion of bitter tears.

She was very unhappy, for that day had brought no letter as she had expected, although Evelyn received one from her brother Norman. He stated that his father still remained in a very critical condition, and Dr. Winthrop would probably be detained longer than he had at first expected.

This was sad news to Salome, and she tried to think that her husband's time was so fully occupied with his father that he had not been able to write; but she hoped the next steamer would bring her a letter, and she resolved to be patient and try not to grieve.

Two or three days went by, and matters seemed to have settled themselves a little more pleasantly. Madam did not once refer to disagreeable subjects, was even distantly gracious, and Salome fondly hoped that all hostilities were at an end.

But she did not know the determined woman. She had laid her plot to rid her son of the wife whom she suspected and disliked, and she was not one to swerve from her purpose.

She had already begun her work by suppressing every letter that came for or went from Salome. She had also

written a very crafty letter to Dr. Winthrop, in which she mentioned that she had suddenly fainted one day when making her a little visit in her room; that she still seemed more delicate than usual, and she was quite anxious about her. She had informed him, also, of the suspicious meeting between his wife and the strange man.

"We feared at first," she wrote regarding her ill health, "that it might be caused by the old heart trouble, although her symptoms did not indicate it; but since then Evelyn and I have not felt quite well, and this fact, together with a certain odor that seems to pervade the house, has led me to fear there is a flaw in the plumbing, which allows the escape of sewer-gas; you know we had an experience of this kind in the old home some years ago. I had a talk with Salome, and tried to persuade her to go home with us, but she seems determined to remain here until your return. She did not appear to receive my proposition in a very friendly spirit, and very resolutely said that nothing but an express message from you to that effect would induce her to leave the house. Pray do not think that I wish to interfere in your domestic arrangements, my son, but really I feel that it would be safest for the comfort and welfare of all parties if we could leave the house at once, and close it until you can return and attend personally to whatever may be wrong."

It of course took eight or nine days for this missive to reach Dr. Winthrop, and during this time Salome heard nothing from him, except indirectly through letters which madam or Evelyn received from Norman, his brother.

Madam did not mean that she should have one word from him until she received her notice to leave his house, which, she felt sure, would come in the form of a brief cable message, since he surely would not risk her health long enough to wait for a letter to reach her. This she believed would so wound her proud, sensitive nature, and work in with her own crafty innuendoes regarding the illegality of her marriage, that she would do something desperate.

Dr. Winthrop, almost a prisoner by the bedside of his sick father, wondered why he did not hear from his wife,

until he received his mother's alarming epistle, and then he believed that she must have been too ill to write to him.

"Sewer-gas in the house! and they have been living there eight days longer!" he exclaimed, looking very anxious as he finished reading the startling communication. "They must leave the place immediately."

But he realized that Salome was not quite happy, aside from the state of her health. There was something in the tone of madam's letter, in spite of all her care to disguise her enmity toward his wife, that betrayed this. What she had said about Salome not receiving her advice in a very friendly spirit and refusing to act upon it, indicated it, and he resolved that he would not insist upon her going with them to their home; but out of that poisoned atmosphere, in which he believed she was living, go she must without an hour's unnecessary delay.

And so, on the spur of the moment, he cabled the following message to her:

"Close house immediately; go to the —— Hotel; remain there until my return."

The hotel he named was a quiet but well-conducted house, and he had chosen to have her go there because it would be more home-like than a larger and more pretentious place; indeed, it was a kind of family hotel, and its very exclusiveness and remoteness from busy haunts would seem more like the home in Madison Avenue.

Having dispatched the message and relieved his mind somewhat, he went back to his apartments and wrote his reasons for it and his wishes more at length, charging her to be very careful of her health and prescribing certain remedies for her to take to counteract the effects of sewer-gas.

The letter was full of tenderness and of regret for her illness; it spoke of his anxiety and disappointment on account of not hearing from her, and begged her, if she were not able to write herself, to have Nellie do so; she was to have Nellie go with her to the hotel, though in his haste he had forgotten to mention it in his cable mes-

sage. If Salome had ever received this precious letter she would have known that all was well—that she was still the dearest object which earth held for her husband. But it was destined to go the way of several others and never into the hands of the young wife, to comfort her almost breaking heart.

She was feeling better the morning that the cable message arrived, and, as a steamer was expected that day, she looked forward to a letter with almost feverish eagerness.

When the postman came on his afternoon round she hastened out to the door to get the mail. But, as had been usual of late, Evelyn was there before her.

"No letter per steamer to-day," she said, affecting to be greatly disappointed, as she slipped the letters through her hands. "One for mamma, two for me, and—two for True; bills, I suppose."

These last she passed to Salome, and then hastily ran upstairs.

"What can it mean?" murmured the young wife, as, bitterly disappointed, she turned slowly back toward the library.

Just then the hall bell rang, and almost mechanically she went to open the door herself, although she was never in the habit of doing so.

A messenger-boy stood there and handed her a telegram. She signed for it, and then with trembling fingers tore it open.

The words which met her startled gaze were fraught with terrible significance to her:

"Close house immediately. Go to the —— Hotel. Remain there until my return.

"TRUMAN H. WINTHROP."

This, then, was the answer to her letter of confession, the first and only words she had received from him since she wrote it.

He had received it, and perhaps one from his mother also, with her version of all that had passed. He recognized the delicate, precarious—possibly he felt disgrace-

ful position in which they were all placed, and he had concluded that it would not do for her to remain in his house, nominally his wife, when she had no legal right there.

In her sensitive and overwrought state of mind it seemed equivalent to an acknowledgment that their marriage had only been a farce, and therefore his standing, as well as her own, would be compromised if she remained there.

She knew where the —— Hotel was; she knew that it was quiet and unpretentious, a place where she would not be likely to be known or recognized by any of Dr. Winthrop's acquaintances.

And now the very consideration which he had shown for her feelings and comfort in this respect she turned in judgment against him, strange as it may seem, and it goes to show how easily people mistake the motives of others. He had not asked her to go with his mother and sister, who of course would return to their own home if his house was to be closed; but she was to hide herself in this quiet hotel, and there await his return to have her fate decided.

The more she thought about it, the more morbid she became, the more she distorted and misinterpreted the meaning of the message, and her proud spirit rose in rebellion at being so summarily and unjustly dealt with.

With a heavy and aching heart she dragged herself upstairs, shut herself in her chamber, and did not go down again that day.

The next morning she made her appearance as usual at the breakfast-table, but, to the surprise of madam and Evelyn, she was clad in a travelling-costume. She was very pale and wan; there were dark circles under her eyes, but a very resolute expression about her sweet mouth which betrayed that she had arrived at some very grave decision.

"I received a cable message from Dr. Winthrop yesterday," she quietly remarked as she passed it to madam, "and he requests me to close the house and go to the —— Hotel to await his return. I have made all my arrange-

ments, and if it will not seriously inconvenience you, I would like to dismiss the servants to-day and send the keys to Dr. Winthrop's lawyer before I go."

A flash of triumph shot into Madame Winthrop's eyes as she read that brief message, for her plot had worked exactly as she had hoped and wished.

She saw that Salome believed she had received her sentence in that message; that she was crushed and humiliated, although she marvelled at her quiet dignity and her wonderful self-control.

"Oh, yes, we can easily manage to get away by noon, as we have only our trunks to pack," she responded, giving Evelyn a significant look. "And I think," she added, "that Truman is very wise to propose this measure. You can come with us, Salome, if you would prefer to do so instead of going to a hotel," she concluded, with an appearance of hospitality, although she knew well enough that her offer would be refused.

"Thank you; but my plans are all settled, and I shall leave as soon as I can see that everything is in order," Salome answered, with dignified courtesy.

Madam understood that she intended to see that her husband's commands and interests were faithfully attended to—that the house would have to be closed under her own supervision, and that they would be expected to take their departure before she went; in fact, that she would be mistress there until she surrendered the keys.

It did not take them long to do their packing, and their trunks were sent directly to their own house in Thirty-fourth Street. They, however, engaged Dr. Winthrop's servants to come to them, as they had none of their own. All were glad to secure places so readily, and eagerly accepted the proposition—all save Nellie, who begged Salome to allow her to go with her.

"I shall not need you, Nellie," Salome answered, with quivering lips, for the girl had been very kind to her, and she had become deeply attached to her.

"But you will take me back when you go to housekeeping again?" the girl pleaded. "I will stay with my sister, and you can send for me when Dr. Winthrop comes

back. I wouldn't live with those—cats"—and she nodded significantly toward madam's room—"for double wages."

"I should be very glad to have you with me again, Nellie," Salome answered evasively; "and—if you are at liberty when—when I need you again, I will send for you."

The girl thanked her and burst into tears as she took her wages, and then went away to pack her trunk.

Madam and Evelyn hastened operations and left the house about eleven o'clock, without even saying a word of farewell to Salome. She was engaged in overseeing the packing of the silver, and, oppressed by a sense of guilt, they were glad to get away from her accusing presence.

Salome neglected nothing; everything was put in perfect order under her supervision. All the silver and everything that would be likely to tempt rogues were sent to a safety vault; the water and gas were turned off, and nothing was allowed to be left in a way to come to any harm.

The servants were all paid and a generous gift added to their wages, and then Salome was ready to leave her beautiful home.

Dick was still to have charge of the horses and exercise them every day, and he was both touched and pleased with this mark of her confidence.

He asked if he should bring the ponies around to take Salome where she wanted to go, but she told him no, she had ordered a carriage, though her pale face flushed a bright scarlet as she rejected his offer and thought that she should never ride after the pretty creatures again.

Then with her own hands she locked the door, through which she passed feeling that she was a discarded wife, giving the key to Dick, to be delivered to Dr. Winthrop's lawyer, and stepped into the carriage, while the driver placed her trunk, the one she had brought with her from Boston, on the rack behind.

The next moment she was driven away, while Dick, who stood on the steps looking after her, shook his head

in perplexity as he brushed a tear from his cheek with his sleeve and muttered:

"Something's wrong; that heart-broken look on her white face ain't fer nothing. I dunno what's up, but things have been getting mixed and muddled ever since they came home. I only wish the doctor'd put in an appearance this very minute."

CHAPTER XV.

AN APPALLING TRAGEDY.

LATE that same evening a stately woman walked into the office of the —— Hotel.

She was enveloped in a long cloak and was closely veiled.

She inquired if Mrs. Truman Winthrop had taken rooms there that day.

"No," the clerk answered, "there is no one by that name in the house."

The woman started slightly and glanced keenly at him.

"Are you quite sure?" she asked.

"Yes, madam; here is the hotel register; madam can examine for herself," and the young man placed the book before her.

She ran her eye quickly up and down the lines of the open book.

The name of Winthrop was not there, neither could she find that of Salome Howland, for which she also looked.

She stood silent and perplexed for a moment; then she asked:

"Has there no young woman of perhaps twenty-one or twenty-two years of age, of medium height, dark but rather pale complexion, with black hair and eyes, come here unattended to-day to engage rooms?"

"No, madam; no such person as you have described has been here to-day," was the positive rejoinder.

Madame Winthrop—for the veiled woman was she—thought for a moment; then she said:

"I expected to find such a lady here. She may, however, have changed her plans. If she does not arrive by to-morrow, and any letters come addressed to Mrs. Tru-

man Winthrop, or Mrs. Salome Winthrop, will you kindly have them remailed to the care of Mrs. Alexander Winthrop, No. — Thirty-fourth Street?"

The polite clerk readily promised to do as she requested, and madam, after courteously thanking him, took her leave.

There was a strange glitter of triumph in her eyes as she swept out of the office and entered her carriage.

"It is as I hoped," she muttered. "Everything works well, and I think we may congratulate ourselves that we have seen the last of her."

Alas! she little thought how soon her triumph was to be turned into remorse.

She waited, with some anxiety and impatience, until the arrival of the next steamer, and when, a day or two after, she received two European letters addressed to Salome, which had been remailed from the —— Hotel, she knew that her plot had been successful.

Salome had, without doubt, done just as she desired: she had, stung to desperation by Dr. Winthrop's supposed unjust judgment and sentence, fled from her home and husband.

Such a step, she knew, would be the one of all others most likely to anger and embitter her son, and she hoped, by exerting the proper influence, to induce him to repudiate the wife she so despised, and obtain a divorce from her upon the ground of desertion. Then, she believed, he would eventually turn to Sadie Rochester, and thus secure the whole of the fortune which his uncle had willed him upon certain conditions, and the Rochester wealth as well.

She would spare no pains to bring this about, and if she succeeded, she would feel well repaid for all her sinful scheming against the innocent young wife.

She felt no compunctions about opening the letters she had received, and read, without a quiver of remorse, all the outpouring of her son's fond affection for his wife. He expressed great anxiety because he had not heard from her during the last two weeks, and begged her to send him word by cable if she were ill, and he would leave his

father in the care of another physician and hasten back to her.

"My first duty is, of course, to my wife," he wrote, "and nothing shall keep me here if you need me. Why, why have you not written? Why, if you are ill, has not my mother or Evelyn written about you?"

Madam also received a letter begging her to write just how Salome was. She felt that the proper moment had now come to acquaint Dr. Winthrop with the fact of his wife's sudden disappearance; and she at once wrote a garbled account of what had occurred.

She began by giving him another exaggerated description of Salome's meeting with the strange man, which, she stated, Evelyn had witnessed by the merest chance, and added that she had afterward interviewed him and tried to ascertain the secret of his familiarity with Salome. The man was insolent and evasive—tried to make conditions upon the compliance with which he would make some mysterious revelations about the girl.

Of course such terms were indignantly resented, and then they tried to talk the matter over with Salome and induce her to explain it. She utterly refused and seemed greatly annoyed, even angry, to learn that her interview with the stranger was known to them. After that she had seemed sullen and unhappy, and was apparently only too glad to avail herself of the opportunity to leave the house on Madison Avenue when his message had come telling her to go to the —— Hotel. Even then they had invited and urged her to come to the Thirty-fourth Street residence with them, but she had curtly refused and parted with them in the coldest manner imaginable. Madam concluded her fallacious account by saying that she had since been to the —— Hotel to call upon Salome and see if she was comfortably situated, when to her astonishment she learned that she had not been there at all.

"It's the greatest mystery in the world," she wrote, "what can have become of the poor girl! She was far from being well, although not really ill, having been confined to her bed only one day since your departure, but, of course, we are very much exercised as to what has become

of her. Do you suppose—can it be possible that she has gone with—that strange man whom she met—can he have had anything to do with her mysterious disappearance?"

This letter dispatched, madam felt that she had driven an effectual wedge toward the separation of her son and his despised wife, and she tried to school herself to patience while waiting for the result.

A week passed, and one morning upon opening the paper madam's eyes fell upon the black head-lines announcing a new and heart-sickening horror.

A disastrous fire had occurred the previous night in a certain part of the city, and a great lodging-house for working girls had been burned to the ground.

A dozen lives had been lost, the names of those whose bodies had been found being given, while several were missing.

Madam ran her eye down the list, and she suddenly grew pale with horror as she read, midway of the column, the name "Miss S. Howland, age about twenty-one."

"Can it be Salome!" she breathed with livid lips. She sat staring blankly at the name for several minutes, cold chills creeping over her and tingling to her finger-tips and almost paralyzing her from head to foot. A feeling of guilt and remorse blanched her face and sent a look of terror into her eyes, for—if Salome had perished in that dreadful way she knew that she was, in a measure, responsible for her fate.

As soon as she could collect her thoughts and recover from the numbness that seemed to stiffen every joint and muscle of her body, she ordered her carriage and drove at once to the place where the fire had occurred.

She could not get very near, for a score or more of men were still at work among the ruins and the police would not allow the curious spectators to approach.

But madam, by persistent questioning, discovered who had been the keepers of the lodging-house and where they could be found.

Being energetic people, who depended entirely upon the letting of rooms for their living, they were already engaged in fitting up another establishment for their

homeless lodgers, not far from the one that had been destroyed, and thither madam proceeded at once.

The man and his wife were not averse to talking over the exciting event, and readily gave all the information she desired.

Yes, they knew the girl whom Madame Winthrop described. She had come to them about a week before and seemed worn out and almost ill. She had insisted upon having a room by herself, and as they had but one empty —a small room at the end of a hall up three flights—she had paid a month's rent in advance and at once taken possession of it. The fire had broken out in the second story and midway of the hall; the building, being old, had burned very rapidly, and only the girls who lodged in the upper story and at the end of the house where Miss Howland had a room had failed to escape. The flames had enveloped the stairway, filled the place with smoke, and they must have been suffocated before the fire reached them. Yes, they were sure that at least a dozen girls had perished—four bodies had already been recovered, although but two could be recognized. A crushed and mangled body had been found lying by the remnants of Miss Howland's trunk, and so they were quite certain that one of the victims was the girl whom madam was seeking.

Madame Winthrop shivered with horror as she listened to this dreadful recital, and then asked if the book in which the names of the lodgers had been registered had been saved.

Yes, everything had been saved from the lower story and much of value from the second. Could she see the book? Certainly; they were only too willing to oblige her.

It was brought, and the woman, with a face in which there was not an atom of color and a heart quaking with fear and dread, read the name of S. Howland, and at once recognized Salome's handwriting.

She questioned the people very closely, made them describe Salome over and over again and the articles of clothing she had worn, and she was convinced that there could be no mistake. She had not a doubt that Salome

had perished most miserably. Instead of going to the hotel to which her husband had directed her, she had, in the bitterness caused by her supposed repudiation, sought to hide herself in this obscure lodging-house, and under the name by which she had been known previous to her marriage.

What her ultimate purpose had been, how she had expected to live and where, after she had gained a little rest and strength, no one could tell, for the inmates of the house had seen very little of her, as she had kept very closely in her own room; but one thing was sure, if her object had been to effectually cut herself off from her husband and his family, she had succeeded but too well in doing so.

Madam felt faint and sick when she had learned all that the lodging-house keepers could tell her, and she lay back weak and trembling in her carriage all the way home. Yet, in spite of her guilt and remorse over her sin, there was in the depths of her worldly heart a sense of relief, a feeling of triumph over the fact that her son was free.

The mortifying *mésalliance* had been severed; there would no longer be any fears of meeting the sneers or smiles of ridicule of their aristocratic acquaintances on account of it. Dr. Winthrop's brilliant career would no longer be clogged by a wife whose history was enveloped in a mystery; he could now seek the coveted hand and fortune of Miss Sadie Rochester if he chose, and madam secretly vowed that it should be no fault of hers if he did not in the near future so choose.

. . . . . .

Ill-tidings fly fast, and Dr. Winthrop was not long in learning by cable of the terrible calamity that had overtaken his beautiful young wife.

Shocked, amazed, perplexed by the dreadful message which Madame Winthrop felt compelled to wire him, heart-broken and utterly unnerved by his loss, he left his father, who had slowly begun to improve, with his brother and a skilful physician and took the first steamer home.

Who can portray the agony of suspense which he en-

dured during those eight days of enforced idleness upon the ocean?

They seemed an interminable age to him, and he was fearfully worn out and haggard with grief and anxiety when he finally presented himself before his mother and sister in their home in Thirty-fourth Street.

Madame Winthrop hardly knew him, he was so changed, and her heart quaked with guilt and fear when he came into her presence.

She saw at once that he had some suspicion of the truth, for he questioned both her and Evelyn with a sternness and relentlessness that actually frightened them into admitting much that they would have been glad to conceal.

"I believe that I have you two women to thank for the life-long wretchedness that is to be my portion," he said with exceeding bitterness when he had learned all that he could force from them. "Why could you not let my wife alone? I believe you persecuted her until you drove her to desperation."

"My son, you use hard words; but I felt justified in questioning Salome when I learned how she had compromised herself by meeting that man," Madame Winthrop returned, striving to recover her accustomed dignity, but looking both pale and miserable. "You do not suppose that I was going to allow her to disgrace her husband or his relatives by making such appointments if I could help it?"

"Salome would never have done anything to compromise herself, to say nothing about any one else," Dr. Winthrop sternly returned. "She was a true lady in every sense of the word and I had the utmost faith and confidence in her. My darling! my darling! oh! to think that I have lost you!" he burst forth in a voice of agony, as he wiped the great drops of perspiration from his brow and paced the floor like one wild.

Madam and Evelyn felt appalled before such grief as this. In their determination to crush the gentle young wife they had not counted the full cost to their son and brother. So cold and hard of heart themselves, they could not realize the strength and depth of affection

which he had for the girl whom he had married under such peculiar circumstances.

"Who was this man? What do you know about him?" he demanded, when he could regain his self-control.

"W. H. Brown, he calls himself. He seemed to know all about Salome's past and was very anxious to learn where she lived."

"Does not that very anxiety prove to you that she was innocent of any wrong? ' Dr. Winthrop cried—"that she refused to give him her address because she wanted to have nothing to do with him?"

"No, it proves nothing to me but that she feared to have the man seen by us and her relations with him known to us," madam responded coldly; "and when she found that we had learned of it, she flatly refused to answer any of our questions."

"Of course, mother; and you had no business to arraign her," Dr. Winthrop indignantly rejoined. "I was the proper person for her to make such confessions to, and I have not a doubt that she would have confided the whole story to me upon my return."

Evelyn flushed guiltily at this, remembering the intercepted letter which she believed had contained an explanation of all that her brother could wish to learn.

"I cannot understand why she should go to that wretched lodging-house instead of to the —— Hotel," Dr. Winthrop said, in deep perplexity. "Did she know that you wrote to me accusing her of these improprieties?"

"It would be natural that she should suppose I would," said madam evasively.

"Then I wonder she did not herself write and explain everything."

"Guilt never is desirous of explaining itself," but his mother changed color slightly over the memory of letters which she herself had intercepted.

"There is no question of guilt in the matter," hotly returned her son; "if there is it rests with you two. I will believe no wrong of my darling. Ha!" with sudden thought; "did she know that you wrote to me about the escape of sewer-gas?"

"Sewer-gas!" exclaimed Evelyn, surprised, for madam had not confided to her fully just how she meant to get rid of her brother's wife; the sewer-gas had been a cunning after-thought with her and she had neglected to mention it to Evelyn.

Madame Winthrop shot a lightning glance of warning at her; but it was too late, for Dr. Winthrop was quick to comprehend that some plot had been sprung upon his unsuspecting wife.

"Did she even know there was sewer-gas in the house?" he thundered with white lips—"have you dared to lie to me about this matter?"

"Truman!" his mother tried to say, with all her accustomed stateliness; but her voice faltered, her eyes drooped, and a guilty flush arose to her brow, beneath the compelling power of his searching glance, and his suspicions were verified.

He arose and stood before her white to his lips.

"I can understand now why she would not go to the hotel," he said, in a voice that made both of his listeners shiver; "the whole thing has been a plot to crush an innocent girl and drive her from the protection of her husband; though what possible good you expected to reap from its success I cannot comprehend. I see it all—she knew that you had written to me condemning her, and she may have been too proud to attempt to vindicate herself of the accusations of her husband's mother; or—heavens! can I believe you guilty of such wickedness?—perhaps she did so, and you intercepted her letters; she did not know you had written to me that her health was suffering from the defective plumbing in the house, and when she received my cable dispatch telling her to leave it at once she must have thought that I believed the very worst—that I condemned her and wished to have her no longer in my home. How she must have suffered! my poor, proud, sensitive darling! for she had pride as quick and strong as even that of a Winthrop, and if she believed I thought her no longer worthy to share my home, she doubtless resolved that she would rid me and my persecuting family of herself entirely. And now she is dead—my beautiful,

pure-hearted, much-wronged wife, and I can never right the terrible wrong. Great Heaven! I cannot—I will not bear it! I wonder that I do not curse you both and tell you that I will never look upon your faces again; I—surely will never forgive either of you—you have murdered my wife!"

He turned abruptly from them as he ceased speaking, and left the room, while the two cowering, frightened women could only sit and look into each other's faces in speechless amazement and agony.

CHAPTER XVI.

DR. WINTHROP'S BATTLE WITH HIS GRIEF.

EVELYN was the first to recover herself.

"I never dreamed that True had such a temper," she remarked, in a tone of awe, but uttering a sigh of relief that the trying interview was over.

"He is a Winthrop, and as a race they have been noted for their strong characters; though I must say I have always been proud of the way that Truman has controlled himself. I never knew him to give way like this before," said madam, as she wiped the perspiration from her forehead.

During all her life she never remembered having been so completely cowed by any human being.

Yet she did not feel the least regret for what she had done—she was only annoyed and angered because she had been found out.

Dr. Winthrop, after leaving his mother and sister, went to his own house on Madison Avenue.

He found the ever-faithful Dick in the stable, and at once dispatched him for the key. Upon his return, before going into the house, he questioned the man regarding his wife's appearance and state of health before she went away.

"She wur the swatest little woman, sir, that ever breathed," Dick replied, with a glowing face; "she always had a kind word for everybody, and, sir, she were all right for a week or so after yer honor went away, then she began to droop like."

"But was she really ill, Dick?"

"Begorra, sir, ye have me there! I bethink she wouldn't have been so down at the mouth if ye had been here. I belave, upon me word, that it wasn't her body

that was ailin' at all—but sure, she wasn't happy, like she was before, sir, and it's yerself that needn't be told that the mind has a great influence over the body."

The man was very cautious in what he said; he did not wish to throw suspicion upon his master's mother or sister, although he, as well as most of the servants, knew that they had made life wretched for her.

Dr. Winthrop understood it also; what Dick had told him was sufficient to confirm his suspicions; they had crushed her with their coldness and arrogance, and they had plotted to drive her from her home and husband.

He was filled with remorse for having allowed them to remain in his house to torment her with their overbearing insolence; but he had hoped that her sweetness and beauty would win their hearts.

With his own heart nearly bursting he went into the house, and his first act was to make a thorough examination of the plumbing.

It was in perfect condition—there was no sewer-gas, no disagreeable odor in the house.

Then with reverent steps he went up to her rooms.

A groan of anguish burst from him as he opened the door of her pretty boudoir.

Everything was in the nicest order, but the silence and beauty that had reigned there seemed to mock his grief.

How exquisitely beautiful everything was! But the charm and spirit of the place had vanished.

He went into her chamber, but only to have his sense of desolation intensified. All the dainty toilet articles, which he had taken such pleasure in selecting for her, lay in their places upon her dressing-case; she had not taken a single thing with her.

He opened her closet in a mechanical way, and started back as if some one had struck him when he saw all the beautiful dresses which he had taken so much pride in purchasing hanging before him and nicely protected from dust by a sheet which had been fastened over them. Did she imagine he would ever allow any one else to wear them?

He went to her bureau and opened the drawers one by

one, and he could readily see that whatever had been purchased with his money had been left behind.

"Oh!" he groaned, "how they must have wounded and humiliated her to have made her discard everything that I had given her!"

He lifted the lid of a jewel casket, which he had also purchased for her, expecting to find there the jewels which he had so liked to see her wear.

But the velvet cushion was bare and his heart gave a great bound. She had not, then, utterly repudiated everything, and this thought comforted him a little.

Then a great trembling seized him as he caught sight of a letter pinned to the satin-lined cover of the box. It was addressed to him, and with quivering fingers he detached it and tore the contents from the envelope.

"My Dear Husband," it began, but tears sprang to his eyes, and so blurred was his sight that for a few moments he could not go on with his reading. "Let me call you so for this last time," he read when he could see again; "yes, for the last time, for I am going away from you forever. I can see now that it was a great mistake, your marrying me. I was afraid at the time that you were influenced merely by gratitude. I am so sorry now that I had not strength to say no when you urged me to be your wife. If you had but told me truly that it was not love, but pity for my desolate condition and a desire to care for me when I was unable to take care of myself, it would have been so much easier and better every way. Then, too, you were pledged to another, and that made a triple wrong. It breaks my heart to think of it and that some other poor girl, who loved you as blindly, perhaps, as I have done, has been grieving over your broken troth. And now you have banished me from your home, as if you believed me unworthy to remain there. What is my offence, True? Did I not make my explanations clear enough in the letter I wrote you a little more than a week ago? Is it true that because I withheld my true surname —and, True, I had almost forgotten I had any other save that of Howland—is it true, as your mother says, that our

marriage was illegal—that I am no wife? Is that why you have sent me away? If you had only written to me and explained, instead of sending me that dreadful cable message. Instead of the word I begged for—stay—you have told me to go. Perhaps you will write now, but since you were in such a hurry to have me go; since you appear to fear a scandal, and I know that you did not love me—though you seemed to—I shall not wait for any cold, cruel letter confirming my fate, but take myself utterly away from you at once. I wrote you all the truth and only truth, True. Did what I told you seem too dreadful, too humiliating, to be overlooked and forgiven? Then I could not help the meeting with that miserable man, whom I detested and feared—indeed, I could not, although your mother insists I have compromised you all by the encounter. It was just as I told you in my letter, and you must know that I could never associate with such a man. I am sorry—so sorry to have brought discord into your family; my own are all dead—father, mother, and sister—and I should have been so glad if I could have stood in the light of a daughter and sister to your friends. But I have written all this before—how useless to repeat it! I merely meant to tell you that I cannot go to that hotel and register myself as your wife, when they tell me that I am not, and when I am in doubt as to what my future is to be—no, not doubt, for they say you will never forgive the deception that made our marriage illegal. If you are not really already free, the law will free you from a runaway wife." And here a little of her pride and spirit blazed forth. "I should not come back here if you did find me; I cannot forgive you that, while you were pledged to another, you pretended to love me, and married me to repay an imaginary debt. But—I love you—I love you, and I would have been true and faithful to you all my life. Forgive me for breaking down thus, but my poor aching heart would make its last lament. How I shall live without you I cannot tell; perhaps I shall not live long; I think I shall be glad if I do not, and then you will be free indeed. Try to think as kindly of me as you can. I have not willingly deceived you; you know

I wanted to tell you everything in the first place, but you would not let me. You were very kind to me the little time we spent together, and when I began to believe that you were growing to love me, as I love you, I was happier than I can express. I shall leave everything, save what I have brought with me. The diamonds and other jewelry I have arranged to send to the safe deposit vault, with the silver; also the check-book you gave me, and which I have not made use of at all. The money that you gave me at the same time—or what there is left after paying the servants—I will keep, for I may not be able to go to work just yet to earn for myself. I have tried to arrange everything as I thought you would like; I hope you will find all in good order when you return. Good-by, True—O True!"

The letter was not signed, and those last words were hardly legible, as if her fingers had almost refused to trace them.

Dr. Winthrop had groaned aloud again and again during the perusal of this hopeless, pathetic epistle, and when he came to the end—to that passionate outburst, "O True!"—he bowed his face upon his hands and sobbed aloud.

"Oh, why did I leave her here?" he sobbed. "I ought to have known how it would be. They persecuted and crushed her with their suspicions and accusations and family pride! My poor, lost darling! it was too, too cruel!"

It was dark before he could regain anything approaching composure, and then he went to seek the people who had kept the ill-fated lodging-house where Salome had gone to hide. He wished to make inquiries regarding the terrible tragedy that had robbed him of his wife.

But he gained no new points.

Miss Howland had come there in a hack, they told him. They did not know where she came from, nor how long she intended to remain there. She was not well—not able to work, and kept secluded in her own room, but as she paid her rent in advance they did not concern themselves about that.

Dr. Winthrop made them describe her minutely and questioned them very closely, and he was convinced there was no mistake—it was Salome of whom they were talking beyond the shadow of a doubt.

"Are you sure that she did not escape—that she was —was——"

He could not complete the sentence except by a shiver of horror.

"Burned?" supplemented the less sensitive landlord. "Yes, sir, it was simply impossible for her to escape—in fact, all the girls who were on that side of the stairway were doomed. But I don't think they suffered so very much, sir," he added, as he saw how white the young doctor's lips were. "They must have been suffocated before the worst came."

"And—and their—bodies?"

No one would have recognized Dr. Winthrop's voice as he made this inquiry.

"Well, sir, you see they weren't all recovered—it was a terrible fire, and when the walls fell in they must have been crushed and slowly consumed among the red-hot ruins. Only five or six were found, and those were buried in Greenwood by subscriptions raised by some kind ladies."

Dr. Winthrop would hear no more—he staggered to his feet and groped his way like a blind man into the street, wondering if he should go mad—wondering if he should ever again be able to sleep, with the memory of that horror haunting him.

He returned to his house, but not to rest. He paced from room to room of his lonely dwelling all night long and fought his grief as only such strong, deep natures can fight, and when morning broke it was hard to recognize in that bowed form, that haggard and furrowed face, the handsome, stately, and energetic Dr. Truman Winthrop.

He sent Dick out to procure food which he forced himself to eat, simply because he knew that he must have nourishment, and then, still unnerved and broken, shuddering with horror and quivering with grief, he again wandered all day about the desolate and cheerless abode.

When night came he was utterly exhausted, and throwing himself all dressed upon his bed, he slept simply because he was worn out, and tired nature must have rest.

The next day was Saturday, and at an early hour of the morning he again presented himself before his mother and sister.

His face was cold and stern, and he met their anxious, inquiring looks with hard, almost a vacant stare.

"I have come to tell you that I sail again for Europe this noon," he said in a hollow voice. "I simply notify you of my plans that you need not suffer useless anxiety or make needless inquiries."

"Truman——" began his mother, in an humble, tremulous tone, for mental suffering had told somewhat upon her during the last few days.

"Please spare me any objections or comments," he interrupted in a voice that had not a particle of feeling in it. "I shall remain in London with my father until he is able to come home; then I shall send him with Norman. When I shall return I do not know."

"But your house—your horses and carriages," said Evelyn.

"My lawyer will attend to everything," was the brief reply.

"Oh, my son, do not go from us in such a mood as this," pleaded his mother.

He turned upon her with a fierceness that she had never seen in him before.

"You have broken my heart and you call it a mood," he said hoarsely. "But for you two my wife would have been living and happy to-day, and I should not have to go desolate to my grave. I will never forgive you—never!"

He turned quickly, as if the sight of them was unendurable, and without another word or even a backward look walked from the room.

A moment later they heard the outer door close after him, and knew not whether they would ever see him again.

Madame Winthrop buried her face in her handkerchief, a groan of misery bursting from her.

Truman—her first-born—had been her idol all his life, and such a separation as this was a terrible blow to her.

Too late she realized that she had plotted and sinned for naught; too late she saw that her ambition and pride had wrought the ruin of several lives.

Evelyn burst into a passion of tears and berated her brother as "a hard-hearted brute."

They were very lonely and miserable for a time after that, but callers soon began to crowd in upon them, invitations to dine and to various places of amusement followed, and Evelyn, to drown the voice of conscience, plunged at once into all the gayeties of the season.

Madam of course had to accompany her as chaperon, though at first she did so with fear and trembling, for she was in constant dread of meeting inquiries regarding her son's romantic marriage.

But, strangely enough, no one appeared to know anything about it, and the only questions she had to answer were those relating to her husband's recent illness and expected return.

She breathed easier when she found that Salome's existence seemed a secret, and even, as time went on, began to congratulate herself that things were as they were—"Truman would soon get over his grief, and then—Sadie Rochester again."

The winter passed; spring came; but May began to send forth her buds and blossoms before Mr. Winthrop was thought well enough to endure the voyage.

Norman Winthrop returned with his father, but could give no definite information as to his brother's plans. He was going to travel, he told them, but where he did not know, and he had sent no message to either his mother or his sister; neither had he written them one word since his abrupt departure.

The Winthrops all went to Cape May for the summer, where Evelyn and her mother tried to stifle conscience by going into society as much as possible and by entertaining when the health of Mr. Winthrop would permit.

He was still very delicate, and spent much of his time,

attended by a servant, upon the beach, or with his books upon the broad veranda of their cottage.

No word came across the ocean to them from the wanderer, and only once during these long months did they hear, even indirectly, from him.

Then they learned that a friend of one of their new acquaintances had met him at Interlaken, where they planned to make the ascent of the Jungfrau together, after which they were going to Germany in company.

It was meagre news, but they were glad to get even this crumb to feed their hungry hearts.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ROCHESTERS ARE INTRODUCED.

IT was a fine day in October.

In a beautiful room in one of the apartment-houses in the Rue de Rivoli, in Paris, a handsome woman might have been seen sitting before a cheerful fire in the polished grate; for although the sun was shining brightly outside and the day was perfect, the air within the rooms, shut in, as they were, behind solid walls, was keen and chill.

The occupant of this room was, perhaps, forty-five years of age, though she looked younger. She had a small, finely shaped head, large, liquid brown eyes, and chestnut hair, in which it would have taken a keen eye to discover a thread of silver, rather delicately moulded features, and a clear, softly tinted complexion. She was tall and rather slight, although not angularly so, and there were in every movement an energy and an animation which, in a woman of her age, were extremely fascinating.

She was simply, though elegantly, clad in a heavy, lustreless black silk, that fitted her fine figure like a glove, while the soft white crape ruchings at her throat and wrist betrayed that she was in mourning.

Low slippers incased the well-shaped feet that rested upon a hassock. In her white hands, upon one of which there gleamed a massive wedding-ring and a costly diamond, she held some bright-colored fancy work, and, in the light of the glowing fire, surrounded by the rich hangings and elaborate furnishings of the room, she made a very attractive picture.

Presently the door behind her opened, and a girl of about twenty-two or twenty-three years swept into the apartment in a bright, breezy way that was like the rus-

tling of the gayly tinted autumn leaves upon the trees outside.

"Mamma, such news as I have to tell you—you cannot guess, I am sure!" she cried as she threw herself into a low rocker opposite the elder woman and began to remove her beautifully fitting gloves.

She, too, was tall and slight, elegant in figure, perfect in her bearing; but, unlike her companion, she was very fair, with light hair, deep blue eyes, and a faultless complexion; and though her features were cast in a less delicate mould than her mother's, she was an exquisitely beautiful girl.

She, too, was clad in black, but it was very becoming to her perfect complexion.

"News, Sadie?" returned the elder lady as her eyes rested with a look of pride and pleasure on the graceful figure opposite her. "I hope it is home news, then, for I am really hungry for something American."

"It is decidedly American," cried the young lady, with a clear, exultant laugh, "for I have met a gentleman from New York this morning."

"Who?" demanded her mother eagerly.

"Guess."

"I never could; don't torture me with suspense, Sadie."

"Well, then, a no less important personage than Dr. Truman Winthrop, the man whom Milton Hamilton decreed should be the husband of Albert Rochester's daughter," the girl answered, her blue eyes gleaming with a light that made them seem almost black, a peculiar smile wreathing her red lips.

"Sadie, you do not mean it!" exclaimed Mrs. Rochester, for the woman was no other than the widow of the late Albert Rochester, who had covenanted with his friend, Milton Hamilton, to unite, by the marriage of his only daughter with the namesake and heir of the latter, the magnificent estates of Brookside and Englehurst into one inheritance.

"Yes, I do," responded the girl, with increasing animation. "I was in the Luxembourg with Mrs. Savage and Nell,

when who should come along but Nell's particular friend, Mr. Tillinghast—you have heard her speak of him—and with him another man, whom he introduced as Dr. Winthrop. You should have seen his start and look of surprise when he was presented to me," and the young lady completed her sentence with an amused ripple of laughter.

"It is a little strange that we should always have thought of him by the name of Hamilton until last autumn, when he wrote to your father that he was coming abroad to meet us, and signed himself Truman Winthrop," said Mrs. Rochester musingly.

"Well, I do not know, mamma; we have not known much about the Winthrops. Papa never met them. The most we have known was that one of the sons had been named for Mr. Hamilton, who had adopted and made him his heir; so it was natural, I suppose, that we should think of him as a Hamilton. It is possible that he resumed his family name again after his uncle's death," Miss Rochester argued thoughtfully.

"Well, I consider it a piece of unexampled good luck, your meeting him to-day," the elder lady remarked, with animation. "I did not dream that he was on this side of the Atlantic and we should have been on our way to New York a week later. Do you suppose he has written to us again at Berlin that he was coming abroad, and, failing to get a reply, has been wandering about in search of us?"

"I am sure I have no idea," mused the young lady. "I have always thought it very strange that we never heard anything after receiving that letter of appointment last year. It has struck me that he was very shy of us —that he dreaded to meet a woman whom some one else had picked out for him; and no one could blame him if he did. Still, he might at least have explained his delay in coming abroad."

"Describe him to me, Sadie. Is he nice-looking?" asked Mrs. Rochester with eager interest.

"Mamma, he is grand—a perfect king in appearance! I believe he is the handsomest man I have ever seen," the young lady returned with a glowing face. "Only," she

added, "he seemed strangely sad, as if he had recently met with some great trouble, and there was a wide band upon his hat. There must have been some recent death in his family."

"Perhaps that is the secret of his long delay in coming abroad," said Mrs. Rochester. "However," she added, a peculiar gleam in her dark eyes as they met her daughter's, "it is rather fortunate for us, for we can manage things our own way now. You think you will like him?"

"'Like?' It is a strange word to use in connection with him," said Miss Rochester, with a flush.

"Then there will be nothing disagreeable to you in fulfilling the conditions of the will, provided the gentleman is also agreeable?" questioned Mrs. Rochester, bestowing a searching glance upon her companion.

"No, indeed!" she answered decidedly. "If I am any judge, Dr. Winthrop is a man who would not meet his equal among a thousand. Any woman might feel proud to win him for her husband, even without the very tempting plum that his uncle has left him."

"Well, well! I should say this was a case of love at first sight," said Mrs. Rochester, laughing; "and it is evident that you will do your utmost to make yourself agreeable."

"Yes, if he gives me the opportunity; but I am not going to throw myself at him, much as I desire to become mistress of that double fortune," responded the girl haughtily, but with an anxious frown upon her brow.

"Well, he might go the world over and never find as handsome a wife as you would make him, Sadie," returned her mother, bestowing a proud glance upon her daughter. "For my sake, as well as your own, you must try to win him, for you know the will says that I can have full control of the income of fifty thousand only upon the consummation of the marriage. What an abominable will it is!" she added indignantly; "and what a couple of fools those two men were! Do you believe Dr. Winthrop will call upon us?"

"I cannot tell," responded Miss Rochester thoughtfully; "he looked too sad to-day to care to make new acquaint-

ances. I should really like to know what his trouble is. He did not seem disposed to talk with any of us; but after the introductions were over he passed on and appeared to be absorbed in the pictures, although once or twice, as I was talking with Mr. Tillinghast, I caught him regarding me with a curious glance."

"He was probably taking the measure of the wife whom his uncle had selected for him," Mrs. Rochester observed; adding, "I wonder if he knows that Mr. Rochester is dead?"

"I don't know; but he was evidently surprised to learn that we were in Paris."

"Yes, we were in Berlin when he wrote that he would join us, and doubtless he imagined that we were still there. I should suppose he would call; I do not see how he can do otherwise—it would really seem rude in him to avoid us, even though he should not wish to fulfil the conditions of the will," Mrs. Rochester gravely observed.

Yes, Dr. Winthrop was in Paris.

He had met a friend at Interlaken, and together they had made a tour of the Alps and of Germany, and now were intending to spend a little time in Paris, after which they were to go on to Italy.

He had been greatly astonished when he was so unexpectedly introduced to Miss Sadie Rochester in the Luxembourg.

The meeting had also been a great shock to him, for it brought vividly to his memory all the past and opened afresh the wounds caused by his recent loss.

He had not given any special thought to the Rochesters since his marriage. He had expected, as we already know, to go abroad to meet them the previous fall, but his duties in New York had prevented. Then as soon as the epidemic in that city had subsided, he had gone to keep a long-deferred appointment with his friend Dr. Cutler, of Boston, after which he intended to join his family abroad and meet the lady whom his uncle and his mother were so anxious he should marry.

Meantime Mr. Rochester, who had long been in poor health, had died suddenly, and Mrs. Rochester—who, by

the way, was a second wife—never having liked Berlin, but having always been eager for the gayeties of the French capital, made arrangements as soon as possible to come to Paris, where she and her daughter had remained ever since.

Being in mourning, they could not go into society very much, but they managed to have a pleasant time visiting various points of interest and mingling in a quiet way with a few Americans whom they found in Paris.

Dr. Winthrop, after having sent his father home with his brother, had begun a sort of aimless wandering, and had been so absorbed in his grief that he had not given a thought to the Rochesters.

He knew that he had broken the conditions of his uncle's will by marrying Salome; and even had he realized that he could still marry Miss Rochester, or given it any thought whatever, he probably would have imagined that she would not now entertain any desire for the union, knowing that he had already chosen some one in preference to her and given the affection of his heart to another.

He had been struck with Miss Rochester's exceeding beauty that morning when he was introduced to her, while the quick flush which had mantled her cheek on being presented to him told him that she at once associated him with the strange contract which Mr. Rochester and his uncle had made in connection with them.

He had been a little surprised, too, by her graciousness of manner, by the smile of pleasure and glance of admiration with which she had greeted him.

He had always pictured her as meeting him with coldness, if not with hauteur. Almost any refined and sensitive woman, he thought, would resent being so summarily disposed of to a man whom she had never seen, and of whose character she was in total ignorance.

She certainly would be indignant, he told himself, when, after failing to keep his appointment a year ago, or to notify either herself or her father that he had violated the conditions of his uncle's will, she should learn of his marriage.

"I ought to have written to Mr. Rochester and explained the affair to him," he mused, after returning to his hotel that day; "but so many things crowded themselves upon me that I did not think anything about the matter. I must acquaint him now, and formally renounce all claim to Miss Rochester's hand, so that he can change the provisions of his will in her favor if he wishes; for of course, with my crushed heart and broken life, I cannot marry any woman. What an unpleasant position for her! for her flush to-day told me that she imagined my errand abroad was to seek her. She is truly a beautiful girl. I wonder who she is in mourning for?—her mother, perhaps. I will write at once, state plainly just how I am situated, and then take myself away from Paris with all possible dispatch."

He put his resolution into effect at once. He wrote a full account of the past year; told what had prevented his keeping his appointment for the previous year, of his visit to Boston, and the events which led to his marriage, and the sad incidents that had since so embittered his life. He stated that he had fully intended to meet Miss Rochester, and, if they had been mutually pleased with each other, comply with his uncle's wishes by asking her to be his wife; but now, under the circumstances, he felt obliged to waive all claims to her hand, since it would be but a mockery and an insult to any woman to offer her his hand when his heart was so filled with the image of another, his life and his hopes so blighted by the loss of his wife, even if he himself did not recoil from such a union.

It was a frank and manly letter, written with all the delicacy and feeling that would naturally be expected from one so innately true and noble, and having sealed and addressed it, he dispatched it by a special messenger to the hotel where he had overheard Miss Rochester say she was stopping.

He had arranged with his friend, Mr. Tillinghast, for a drive in the suburbs the next day, and as he did not like to disappoint him, he decided to keep this engagement and leave the following morning for Italy.

He was still very sad; life seemed to have no special attraction for him—he had no ambition but to kill time and keep himself from thinking of the past.

He had lost his interest in his profession, and cared nothing for the hospitals, as one would naturally expect. He rather shunned them, for even the sight of one brought back to his mind so much that was associated with Salome that he could not bear to enter.

The next morning, between eight and nine o'clock, a letter addressed to "Albert Rochester, Esq.," was handed to Mrs. Rochester—it had arrived too late the evening before to be given to her, and she seldom arose before eight.

"What can be the meaning of this?" she exclaimed, as she read the superscription, and grew slightly pale at the now unaccustomed sight of her husband's name upon a letter.

"What is the matter?" inquired Miss Rochester, looking up from the morning paper.

"A letter addressed to your father."

"Open it and read it—then you will know the meaning of it," was the practical suggestion of the younger lady.

"There is no postmark upon it, either," continued Mrs. Rochester, as she broke the seal. "Why, how strange! it is from some one who does not know that Mr. Rochester is not living," she added, with a puzzled air, as she began to read, and then she turned at once to the signature to ascertain who had written the letter.

"Sadie, it is from Dr. Winthrop!" she exclaimed, a moment later.

"Why, mamma!" and the girl flushed a vivid scarlet, for something seemed to tell her at once that the contents of the epistle related in some way to herself.

"Read it aloud—of course it must be something about that contract," she murmured, beginning to tremble with excitement.

Mrs. Rochester obeyed, and both women immediately became absorbed in the romantic story which the young physician had written, to account for his long silence and

his apparent neglect of them, together with the explanation of his sudden departure from Paris.

"What a wonderful—almost improbable story!" Mrs. Rochester cried, when she had finished reading the letter; "and," she added, with white lips and a frowning brow, "I suppose this settles your fate as well as mine regarding that fifty thousand."

"Yes—oh, mamma!" and Sadie Rochester suddenly slipped from her chair and lay white and senseless upon the floor at her mother's feet.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ACCIDENT DISARRANGES DR. WINTHROP'S PLANS.

WHILE Mrs. Rochester and her daughter were absorbed in the contents of Dr. Winthrop's letter, the young physician and his friend, Mr. Tillinghast, were rolling rapidly through the streets of Paris, intending to have a long day in the suburbs.

It was a fine, bracing day near the last of October; the country was in its glory, the roads as smooth as a floor, and Dr. Winthrop, feeling finally released from the Rochester-Hamilton contract and proportionately relieved, seemed more like himself than he had since his great trouble.

The two gentlemen enjoyed their excursion exceedingly; they visited several points of interest, drove over many miles of beautiful country, and finally returned to the city just as the sun was setting.

As they were passing through one of the crowded thoroughfares to their hotel, they came upon a carriage that had just been overturned.

A number of people were gathered about it, and they could see some one assisting a woman from the *débris*.

Mr. Tillinghast put his head out of the window and told the driver to ascertain what the trouble was.

The coachman made the inquiry and replied that two American ladies had been driving; their carriage had been struck by a heavy team and been overturned. One lady had been injured and was now lying unconscious, and the other one was badly frightened.

The sympathies of both men were at once enlisted. They sprang to the ground and made their way through the crowd to see if they could be of any assistance to their

unfortunate countrywomen, and the next moment Dr. Winthrop found himself face to face with Miss Rochester.

For an instant a feeling of annoyance and dismay came over him; then his native chivalry, as well as his professional instinct, was aroused, the more so as he caught sight of a middle-aged woman of fine appearance lying unconscious upon some cushions, the sleeve and front of her dress saturated with blood.

"Miss Rochester! can I be of any assistance?" he inquired, in a grave, courteous tone, for he would not force his services upon her even in an emergency like this.

The girl shot a quick, startled look at him, for she had not seen him until he spoke her name; then a faint smile broke over her pale face, and she cried eagerly:

"O Dr. Winthrop! if you will be so kind as to see how seriously mamma is injured I shall be very grateful."

He was on his knees before the unconscious woman, making an examination before she had ceased speaking. He found that Mrs. Rochester's left arm had been broken, and was also badly cut by the glass from a shattered window, while he feared there might be some internal injury, the nature of which he could not determine without a more thorough examination.

"Tillinghast," he said to his friend, "lend a hand here; we will put her in our carriage—that is, if Miss Rochester approves," he added, glancing at the anxious girl.

"Certainly. Please do just what you think is best, and believe me I am very thankful to have you come so opportunely to our aid," she returned earnestly.

Dr. Winthrop tied a ligature about the bleeding arm, and then Mrs. Rochester was borne to the carriage, the daughter following, while, having given the driver the street and number, the young physician sprang upon the box beside him, telling him to drive with all possible speed to their destination.

They had not far to go, and fifteen minutes later the injured woman was lying upon her own bed, and Dr. Winthrop was making a careful examination of the case.

He found nothing more serious than the broken bone

and the cut, which was an ugly one, although there was also quite a severe bruise upon her shoulder.

The broken bone was soon skilfully set, a few stitches taken in the gaping wound, and then the woman was restored to consciousness and made as comfortable as circumstances would permit, after which Dr. Winthrop turned to Miss Rochester and gave certain directions about the treatment to be pursued during the night.

These matters settled, he quietly inquired:

"Do you know of any skilful surgeon whom you would like to have for Mrs. Rochester?"

Miss Rochester looked up at him surprised.

"I am sure no one could do better than you. Why should I not leave her in your care?"

"Thank you for the confidence you manifest," he replied, "but I leave Paris to-morrow morning, and would like to place Mrs. Rochester in good hands before I go."

She understood; she knew that he was hurrying away from Paris because he felt that it would be awkward to meet her, and she flushed at the thought.

But beautiful Sadie Rochester was an accomplished woman of the world, young as she was. It was her delight to conquer the hearts of men—the more difficult the conquest the greater her pleasure in the victory—and now she felt an uncontrollable desire to bring this man also to her feet.

She had been very much prepossessed with Dr. Winthrop when she was first presented to him by her friend; she had rarely met any one who made so strong an impression upon her, and as she had stood before him looking into his fathomless eyes and reading his grand face, she had congratulated herself that he, with his great fortune, was the man who was destined to be her husband.

She had therefore been terribly disappointed when, that very morning, she had learned the story of his marriage, of his disinclination to fulfil the conditions of his uncle's will, and of his intention of leaving Paris without even the courtesy of paying her a call.

Now accident had thrown him again in her way. Men did not grieve always over the loss of their wives; they

were often consoled by taking another; and why should she not set her wits at work to win him from his sorrow, and thus secure for herself the position and fortune she so much coveted?

Such thoughts as these had been busy in her brain ever since he had come so opportunely to her aid, and now she suddenly resolved to make the most of her opportunity.

"O Dr. Winthrop, must you go to-morrow? Is it absolutely necessary?" she cried appealingly, while she glanced anxiously toward the room where her mother lay.

It was not absolutely necessary; his time was his own, and he had intended to stay longer in Paris before his meeting with her.

He flushed slightly with the consciousness of this, and evaded a direct reply.

"I had arranged to leave for Italy in the morning," he said.

"I am very sorry," Miss Rochester returned, with a slight tremor in her voice; "because, although you are a stranger to us, the fact that you are one of our countrymen makes me have more confidence in you than I could have in a native surgeon, however skilful he might be."

She was very beautiful. She had exchanged her street dress, which had been torn and soiled in the overturning of the carriage, for a white cashmere tea-gown, that was simply trimmed with black watered ribbons, and was very becoming to her, while the appealing expression in her glance and that pathetic little quiver in her tone touched the young physician to the heart.

"It is not as if we had papa to depend upon now," she added, with a sigh, and then suddenly stopped.

Dr. Winthrop started, and glanced sharply over her black and white dress, a sudden light breaking upon him.

"Do you mean——" he began, interpreting her emotions rightly.

"Yes, that papa died in Berlin last fall; of course you did not hear of it," she said, remembering the letter received that morning.

"No," and instantly his mind also reverted to the epistle

that he had written to Mr. Rochester. "I am surprised; I had heard nothing of it. It was very sudden, was it not?"

"Yes, and it left mamma and me quite dependent upon ourselves. So it seemed almost like a special providence to me when you appeared this evening to help us in our trouble. Perhaps, however," she added, with another sigh, as if she was trying to be resigned to what she could not help, "you may know of some surgeon whom you could recommend to us—some one whom you know to be reliable. Mamma is quite delicate, and I should not like to trust her with one who was not both skilful and conscientious."

How tenderly she spoke of Mrs. Rochester, and Dr. Winthrop, knowing that the lady was Mr. Rochester's second wife, and consequently Sadie's step-mother, was impressed by this apparent goodness of heart.

Why should he not remain and do what he could for these two lonely women? He might at least postpone his departure for a few days, or until he could be sure that Mrs. Rochester had suffered no internal injury; then after her arm began to knit she would not need very close attention, and he could be spared.

"I will stay," he said gently, "at least until Mrs. Rochester recovers somewhat from the shock of her accident."

Miss Rochester lifted her expressive eyes with a thrilling, grateful glance.

"You are very good," she responded simply. Then after a moment, as if she had suddenly resolved upon the performance of some difficult duty, she continued, speaking rapidly, though she flushed a vivid crimson. "And, Dr. Winthrop, if you will forgive me for speaking very freely, though I know it will set us both more at ease, I would like to tell you that mamma read the letter you sent to papa this morning, and, as we have no secrets from each other, I also know its contents. Nay, I beg you will not allow the fact to make you uncomfortable," she interposed, as he flushed and winced· "it is far better that we should clearly understand each other. It was a foolish and arbi-

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trary thing for two men to make such a contract as papa and your uncle made years ago; as if a couple of young people who had never seen each other could assume such sacred relations to gratify a mere whim. Let me thank you for being so frank in your letter, and—and may I not number you among my friends? unless," she concluded, with a silvery little laugh, that rang like music through the room, "you regard me as an object to be dreaded and shunned."

Dr. Winthrop saw that she understood why he had planned to leave Paris so suddenly, and he thought her charming in her frankness and in so courageously attacking the subject of the contract. Probably she had dreaded the union as much as he, and had gladly welcomed the release which he had been so tardy in tendering her; perhaps she even loved some one else, and would now be free to follow the inclination of her heart.

This view of the matter hurt and irritated him a little, and yet he admired her for being so outspoken, and for trying to put him at his ease, when she could not fail to understand the embarrassment of his position.

"You are very good, Miss Rochester, to meet me so openly upon this subject, and you do me honor in requesting my friendship, which I assure you is most heartily accorded. I am free to confess that when I met you yesterday, I almost felt myself a cumberer of the ground, as if I was a blot upon the otherwise fair sky of your life," the young physician concluded, with a deprecatory smile.

Again his companion laughed sweetly.

"There was no need of such self-condemnation as that, I assure you," she said, "for you were not to blame—neither of us is to blame because our natures recoil from obedience to the arbitrary wishes of our friends. But," with a roguish glance, "if you feel uncomfortable about remaining to treat mamma, on my account, I promise you you shall not once set eyes upon me—you shall not have cause to know that I am in Paris."

He knew that she did not mean it, yet it told him how cleverly she had read his feelings.

"Pray, Miss Rochester, do not imagine that I am so unreasonable as that. I will gladly remain to look after

Mrs. Rochester, but you must not allow my presence to banish you from attendance upon her for a single moment. You have treated me with too much candor to-day for me to entertain any other than the most friendly sentiments," Dr. Winthrop earnestly replied.

"Thank you for the assurance," Miss Rochester answered, with a charming smile. Then she added gently, and with visible feeling: "Mamma and I were both deeply touched by the sad story in your letter, and I want to tell you how sorry I am for your great bereavement; you perceive I am assuming the prerogative of a friend in expressing my sympathy."

Her voice faltered, and there were tears in her eyes as she held out her hand to him.

He clasped it, and seemed greatly affected by the feeling which she manifested.

He could not speak, but he looked the appreciation of her sympathy which he could not express.

With great tact she changed the subject, and kept him talking for some time upon topics of mutual interest, and when he finally took his departure he found, to his surprise, that he had spent more than half an hour in her society, and enjoyed every moment.

The next morning he felt a strange impatience to learn how his patient passed the night, and wondered if his former interest in his profession was not returning to him.

He found Mrs. Rochester much more comfortable than he expected. She was bright and smiling, and he saw at once that she was a woman possessing more than ordinary character, with great energy and natural ability.

She greeted him with charming cordiality and thanked him heartily for having promised to remain in Paris on her account for a few days longer.

"Though," she remarked, with a resolute nod of her head, "I am not going to be ill; I believe I should have got up this morning, before this, only I feared a reprimand from you."

It would be better, he told her, to lie quietly in bed, for two or three days at least, until she should fully recover from the nervous shock to her system.

"But I am in no pain. I am only a trifle weak and a little lame in this shoulder from the hard knocks I received, and I warn you, Dr. Winthrop, that I cannot consent to lie inactive here for any length of time. Poor Sadie is worse off, I believe, than I am this morning," she concluded, with a sigh.

"Is Miss Rochester ill?" Dr. Winthrop questioned, with a look of concern.

He had missed her when he first entered, but kept hoping that she would make her appearance before he left.

"I cannot say that she is really ill; but she, too, is quite lame from a wrench which she received in yesterday's accident," Mrs. Rochester replied.

"I am sorry; can I do anything for her?" Dr. Winthrop eagerly asked.

"Thank you, I do not imagine that she needs any special treatment. She thought that complete rest would do as much for her as anything," the invalid returned, a little gleam of amusement in her dark eyes, as she observed the grave interest that the young physician manifested in her daughter.

He had confidently expected to meet Miss Rochester, and had looked forward to the frank, pleasant greeting which he felt sure he should receive from her.

But Mrs. Rochester had no intention of allowing him to go away moping, and adroitly started a conversation that kept him chatting for some time by her bedside. She was a fluent and intelligent talker and a woman who always made the most of her opportunities, especially when she had any particular object in view.

She referred, in a casual and delicate way, to what she termed the foolish whim of his uncle and her husband; seemed to assume that it was perfectly natural that two young people should revolt against any such unnatural arrangement, and did not once hint at any personal regret for the pecuniary loss which the non-conformance to the contract would entail upon herself or her daughter. She touched upon his peculiar sorrow in a feeling way, mentioned some of the particulars regarding her husband's death, and then passed, easily and gracefully, to more

cheerful topics. She was altogether so genial and entertaining that she seemed less a stranger than an old friend when the young doctor finally rose to go.

Mrs. Rochester laughingly remarked, as he shook hands with her, that if he did not think she needed professional attendance every day he must intersperse such visits with social calls, for she found it very refreshing to meet one so recently from America, notwithstanding they were comparative strangers.

He did not see Miss Rochester the next time he came, nor even the next, and he grew quite impatient and half-suspicious of the "wrench" which confined her to her own room.

But when he made his fourth visit he found her sitting in their pretty parlor, and Mrs. Rochester with her.

Both ladies looked a trifle pale, but exceedingly interesting in their simple but elegant morning robes.

Both greeted him cordially, and after he had given his attention for a few moments to his patient he made some inquiry of the younger lady regarding her own mishap.

"It was not much," she carelessly replied, a slight tinge of color suffusing her face; "just a little strain, perhaps, caused by the overturning of the carriage."

Then she began to talk of something else, and an hour passed in delightful conversation, before Dr. Winthrop realized that he was making an exceedingly unprofessional call.

The few days during which Dr. Winthrop had consented to remain in Paris lengthened into a fortnight before it occurred to him that he was no longer really needed by his patient—that any one else, with even ordinary skill, could now attend to the injured arm as well as he.

Then he excused his disinclination to leave by telling himself that perhaps it would be as well for him to remain until it was time to remove the splints and bandages, and besides, he really did not like to go on without Tillinghast, who was such a pleasant travelling companion, but who seemed to be especially devoted to Miss Savage and strangely indifferent to the attractions of Italy.

CHAPTER XIX.

MRS. AND MISS ROCHESTER RECEIVE STARTLING NEWS.

MRS. ROCHESTER continued to improve daily. She had been in perfect health at the time of her accident, and so suffered no inconvenience from it other than that caused by the temporary uselessness of her arm. But this she could very cheerfully submit to, since she believed it was serving to lure the handsome and wealthy Dr. Winthrop into the matrimonial net from which he had so nearly escaped.

He came every day to visit her, whether her wound needed dressing or not, and always remained for a social chat afterward.

Sometimes Miss Rochester was present, but often she was absent, or she would occasionally come in before he left for a few moments. She always greeted him with perfect frankness and without the slightest embarrassment or self-consciousness. It almost seemed as if she had forgotten that marriage between them had ever been thought of, and only remembered that he was her friend.

All this was very pleasant to the unsuspecting physician, who did not dream that it tended toward a dangerous pitfall laid for his unwary feet; that Mrs. Rochester was only adroitly alluring him with her charming conversation and manifestations of friendliness; that her daughter was simply piquing his interest by purposely absenting herself from his presence, and only occasionally permitting him to bask in the sunlight of her smiles and fascinating society.

It is not strange that Dr. Winthrop eagerly availed himself of anything that would serve to distract his mind from his own mental suffering, and really it would have been hard to find two women more calculated to make a

man forget his trouble, for their tact and resources were boundless.

Upon two or three occasions he had invited Miss Rochester to join him with his friend and Miss Savage on excursions to different points of interest, but she invariably declined with thanks, telling him with her sweetest smile that she could not feel comfortable to leave mamma; perhaps when she was better and able to go out again she would be glad to avail herself of his kind offer to act as their escort, if—he was still in Paris.

He thought it was very lovely in her to be so devoted to her mother—a step-mother at that—and did not once suspect that she was only cunningly angling for the fish which she was determined to land, if possible, high and dry upon the shores of matrimony.

Meantime Madame Winthrop and Evelyn—the latter being intimate with Miss Nellie Savage and in regular correspondence with her—had learned that Dr. Winthrop had met the Rochesters in Paris, and how the meeting had been brought about.

"Everything is coming out all right, mamma," Evelyn had triumphantly remarked, after imparting the information to her mother. "Miss Savage writes that Sadie Rochester is a very fascinating girl, as well as a thorough society woman, and that True is a constant visitor at their hotel."

"That is the best news that I have heard for months," madam responded, her face lighting with pleasure; "and now, Evelyn, I think the wisest thing we can do will be to go directly to Paris, make the acquaintance of the Rochesters, and do all that we can to bring about that marriage."

"I believe that would be a good move, mamma; but would papa consent to the plan?" Miss Winthrop inquired, in some doubt.

"Yes; he said only yesterday that he wished he were back again on the other side of the Atlantic. I imagine, as his health is not fully restored, that he does not feel quite safe to be so far away from Truman, in whose medical skill he has absolute faith."

"Then let us go at once, by all means. I have been dying to get away from New York ever since that dreadful fire; the place seems haunted to me."

The plan met the ready approval of both Mr. Winthrop and his son Norman; it was, therefore, immediately acted upon, and a few weeks later the whole family were pleasantly settled in spacious apartments overlooking the Place de la Concorde.

Dr. Winthrop was greatly surprised and not very well pleased by their sudden and unlooked-for appearance; but, at his father's earnest request, he consented to give up his lodgings and come to them, so that he might be at hand if any one were taken ill. Mr. Winthrop had been very nervous about himself ever since his last attack.

Mrs. Rochester and Madame Winthrop at once became very friendly, and freely opened their hearts to each other; they agreed that a union between the Hamilton heir and Rochester heiress was the one thing, of all others, to be most desired, and pledged themselves to spare no pains to bring about the desired alliance.

"Who was this girl whom your son married under such romantic circumstances, and who died such a dreadful death?" Mrs. Rochester inquired one day during a long and confidential conversation with her new friend.

"She was a Miss Howland."

"Howland! Howland!" repeated Mrs. Rochester meditatively, as if the name had a familiar sound, and yet she could not quite identify it.

"Yes—Salome Howland," said Madame Winthrop.

Mrs. Rochester was sitting by a window, and happened to be looking down upon the street at that moment, so that her companion could not see the deadly pallor that suddenly settled over her face, nor the look of horror that leaped into her eyes at the sound of that name.

"Salome Howland!" she managed to articulate, after a moment, during which she had fought against a deadly faintness that threatened to overcome her; "Salome! that is not a common name. What kind of a person was she? I have a—a great desire to know what she was like."

"Well, I am bound to confess that she was a very attractive-looking girl—very. She had very dark hair and eyes, a peculiarly fair, cream-like skin, delicate, beautiful features, and a very graceful form. She was, perhaps, five feet and a half in height, and in her manner and bearing she was peculiarly self-possessed and pleasing. She had beautiful teeth and small, shapely hands and feet, was well educated, and even accomplished, especially in music."

"Heavens!" murmured Mrs. Rochester, under her breath, and a shiver, as if from a sudden chill, ran over her.

She rose from her chair and straightened herself, as if to throw off a certain numbness that seemed creeping over her, and moved toward the fire.

"It is cold to-day," she remarked, as she bent over the glowing coals, hoping that the ruddy flame within the grate would impart a tinge of color to her face and warm her chilled blood.

"Yes, we are having an unusually severe winter for Paris," Madame Winthrop responded, but without appearing to notice that there was anything peculiar in either the manner or appearance of her guest.

"And your son, Dr. Winthrop, really loved this girl, you think?" Mrs. Rochester resumed, as she sank into a low rocker by the grate.

"Yes," replied her companion, with a frown, "it was a clear case of infatuation, though it mortifies me to confess it in connection with my son. I would not have believed that Truman could have so lost his head over any woman, much less over one surrounding whom there was so much mystery. And he does not seem to get over it, either. It is true that when he is in company he throws off his gloom for a time, but here at home he is sad and depressed—entirely unlike himself," and she sighed heavily as she concluded.

She realized that she was paying dearly for her treatment of her son's wife and for her sinful scheming, for it was only too evident that Dr. Winthrop could not forget it; he had said he would never forgive her, and it was doubtful if he ever did.

"But she is dead—you are sure she is dead?" eagerly inquired Mrs. Rochester, with a peculiar gleam in her eyes.

"Oh, yes; there cannot be the slightest doubt upon that point, for we made the most searching and careful inquiries."

Mrs. Rochester soon after took her leave, but as she went out to her carriage she walked as one in a dream, and her coachman was obliged to ask her twice where she wanted to go before she heard him.

"Home," she briefly said, and all the way she sat rigid as a statue, seeing nothing, hearing nothing of what was going on about her.

She found Sadie in the drawing-room arranging a profusion of flowers in some vases.

"Aren't they lovely, mamma?" she cried with unusual animation as the door opened and her mother entered.

"Yes; where did you get them?" she asked, but in an indifferent tone.

"Mr. Winthrop sent them."

"Mr. Winthrop?" Mrs. Rochester repeated sharply, bestowing a searching glance upon the young lady.

"Yes—Mr. Norman Winthrop," and a swift wave of color flitted across the girl's fair face; for since the arrival of the Winthrop family in Paris, Dr. Winthrop's twin brother had paid very marked attention to Sadie Rochester.

"S—adie!" said her mother in a tone of grave reproof as she noticed the flush. "I hope there will be no nonsense in that direction."

The young girl laughed lightly but with averted face.

"You intend to marry Dr. Winthrop, don't you?" pursued the elder woman, looking anxious.

"Yes, if I can only induce him to ask me," Miss Rochester answered coldly, but looking a trifle pale.

"Then let his brother alone," said her mother sternly—"you have no business to coquet with him; you've broken hearts enough without making mischief in that family."

"Pshaw, mamma!" retorted the young lady impatiently, but her under lip trembled slightly as she

spoke. "Norman Winthorp is capable of taking care of his own heart."

"Capable or otherwise, you had better take my advice and let him alone," was the quick retort. "Why can't you behave yourself, if you have made up your mind to marry his brother? Dr. Winthrop is a man who will never be trifled with, if, indeed, he can be won at all. And, S—adie——"

"Why do you keep halting and stumbling over my name in that fashion, mamma?" Miss Rochester demanded, with an irritable tap of her pretty foot—"it is, to say the least, very—unpleasant."

"Yes, I know, but somehow, I am so upset, I couldn't help it. You will not wonder that I halt and stumble, when I tell you—oh! whom do you suppose Dr. Winthrop's wife was?"

"What a question! How could I possibly know?" returned Miss Rochester, with an indifferent shrug of her shapely shoulders, as she stood back a step or two to admire the arrangement of her flowers.

"Salome Howland!"

"What!" screamed the astonished young woman, as she turned and faced her mother, doubt and terror depicted upon her face, which was now as white as the dainty cashmere robe in which she was clad.

"It is true," said her mother.

"Good gracious, mamma! it can't be possible! I cannot believe it! And—and you know we thought she was dead long ago."

Miss Rochester had now forgotten both her flowers and their giver—everything but the amazing news which her mother had brought her, and, sinking weakly upon a chair, she continued to stare blankly at her.

"So she is—now," Mrs. Rochester returned, with a satisfied inflection upon the adverb. "I do not wonder that you are astonished," she resumed. "I thought I should lose my senses when Madame Winthrop told me of it. That girl who died in London must have been some one else of the same name."

"Oh, I hope there is no mistake this time," whispered

Miss Rochester hoarsely, "for she was the only one who knew, and if she should turn up now it would be dreadful."

"I do not think there can be any mistake," returned her mother, and then she proceeded to relate all that Madame Winthrop had told her, and concluded by remarking, "I never had such a shock as when I realized that Dr. Winthrop had married your cousin; it seemed simply impossible, and yet when she described her, I knew it must be true. She must have gone directly to America after disappearing so strangely. And then to think of her going into a hospital as a common nurse! Still she was always very skilful in your father's sick-room. I hope the Winthrops will never learn the truth—it would ruin all your hopes of ever winning the doctor, if he should ever suspect."

"Nonsense, mamma!" returned Miss Rochester, who was beginning to recover her self-possession and her spirits; "how could they ever suspect the truth, when there is no one now to hint at it? Everything is coming out beautifully, at least I have strong hopes of it. At any rate you and I have had a grand good time this last year by ourselves. Salome was always such a bore and a marplot, in spite of her generosity. However, we shall have it all our own way now, and if I can only manage to win Truman Winthrop I shall have reached the summit of my ambition."

"What an avaricious creature you are, Sadie! But I am afraid Dr. Winthrop will never love you as well as he loved her. Madam says he idolized her," said Mrs. Rochester regretfully.

"I do not expect that he will; I do not want him to. I imagine it would be rather tiresome to be so idolized," the young lady coldly returned; and yet, as she went back to her flowers, her eyes softened and a delicate flush rose to her cheek.

A knock upon the door presently sounded, and a servant announced Mr. Norman Winthrop.

The two women rose to welcome him, one with a smile and blush of pleasure, the other with a sigh and with a look of anxiety upon her pale face.

CHAPTER XX.

A FLIGHT FROM WAR AND PESTILENCE.

MR. NORMAN WINTHROP was so like his brother, the physician, that, to a casual observer, he would have appeared to be the same man.

He had the same symmetrical, stalwart form and noble carriage; the same fine, clear-cut intelligent face, and smile, and hair and eyes. But he lacked something that Dr. Winthrop possessed. Perhaps it was the grave, yet gentle dignity which always characterized the latter; or it may have been the frank, honest, straightforward look with which he met the glance of every one, which Norman had never possessed.

They frequently had occasion to laugh over the fact of their striking resemblance and the ludicrous mistakes which sometimes occurred. For instance, Dr. Winthrop and his brother were once invited to a reception which the young physician was unable to attend. When Mr. Norman Winthrop presented himself before his hostess, she inquired for his brother and he explained that an important engagement had detained him. But chancing just then to glance toward the other end of the room, he exclaimed:

"Why, no! there he is now!"

And excusing himself to the lady, he went to meet his brother and walked straight up to a full-length mirror that had been let into one side of the room, to find that he had mistaken his own reflection for the young doctor.

But Miss Sadie Rochester had never yet been guilty of mistaking one for the other, let her meet them where she would.

She had thought, the first time she saw Dr. Winthrop, that she had met her fate, for she had been attracted

toward him as no other man had ever attracted her. She recognized in him a nature more lofty, a character more true than other men of her acquaintance possessed, and she believed that if she could win him for her husband and thus secure also the two great fortunes, she would have nothing left to wish for.

But when Norman Winthrop suddenly made his appearance upon the scene she realized at once her mistake.

The moment he greeted her—the moment his hand clasped hers and his eyes looked into hers she recognized a magnetic influence which his brother lacked, and from that hour he began to weave a strange spell about her.

She could not say that she liked Dr. Winthrop less, and had she never seen his twin she would have believed that she loved him; but there was a subtle power in every look, tone, and movement of Norman, which set all her pulses thrilling, as if they had been wrought upon by some weird and fascinating music.

Was it the element of wickedness inherent in both their natures which recognized in each other a kindred spirit?

The young man, on his part, seemed fascinated from the hour of their introduction, and, despite the fact that he knew Miss Rochester had for years been the destined bride of his brother, he devoted himself to her, attending her upon every possible occasion, calling upon her frequently, and constantly sending her fruit, flowers, or some other reminder of himself.

Mrs. Rochester saw danger ahead from all this attention, and the evident pleasure with which Sadie received it. She was very much troubled, heartily wishing that Norman Winthrop had never made his appearance in Paris; but she seemed powerless to change anything, or to prevent the development of the acquaintance, and was therefore obliged to let matters take their own course.

It was a very gay winter, in spite of the fact that death had so recently visited both families.

Miss Rochester wilfully insisted that there was no sense in shutting one's self away from all life and enjoyment, simply because they happened to be in mourning, while Madame Winthrop and Evelyn declared that Dr.

Winthrop owed it to them to act as their escort, since Mr. Winthrop was unable to endure excitement of any kind and they always managed—when Norman did not interfere—so that he and Miss Rochester would be thrown together.

Thus the season passed, and both Evelyn and Miss Rochester became so absorbed in their pleasure-seeking that they utterly refused to heed the warning of their friends to leave Paris, for the signs of the times betokened serious political complications.

They laughed to scorn the idea that Americans could be in any danger, and kept putting off their departure until it was too late, and the insurrection of that ever-memorable year burst upon them, with all its horrors. Every avenue of escape from the city was suddenly cut off, and there appeared no possibility of their being able to leave for a place of safety. Those were experiences which tried the souls of both men and women, and it is doubtful if the Winthrop or Rochester ladies were ever so subdued as when they discovered that they were shut into that turbulent city with unknown dangers on every hand.

One morning Dr. Winthrop called at Mrs. Rochester's rooms, and his pale face and hurried manner, plainly betrayed that he was laboring under great anxiety.

Miss Rochester was alone in the drawing-room when he entered, for her mother, not feeling well that morning, had not yet made her appearance.

"What is the matter?" Miss Rochester questioned, as she gave her hand to the young physician; then, with a sudden sense of impending evil as she searched his troubled face, she laid her other hand upon his arm.

"I have come to see if you and Mrs. Rochester can be ready to leave Paris at a moment's notice," he replied.

"Why; are we in any danger?" she cried in alarm.

"Every one in the city is in danger," he answered. "There is no knowing what may happen during the next twenty-four hours. I am going to try to arrange for a place of safety for you, with my mother and sister, if you will be guided by me and consent to go with them."

"Of course I will be guided by you. How good you are to think of us!" Miss Rochester returned, clinging to him and looking up into his face with an air of trust, which she meant should tell him a great deal.

In spite of the strange power which his brother had acquired over her, she was determined to marry Dr. Winthrop if she could win him; the great possessions which the union would secure to her were of more consequence than all the sentiment in the world.

"Of course I should think of you, when you and Mrs. Rochester, have no protector," the young man replied. "I am only sorry now that I did not insist upon your all leaving Paris when I first proposed it."

"Where can we go?" she asked.

"I do not know yet," he said thoughtfully; "I am on my way now to see what arrangements I can make with the American Consul for your safety."

"For our safety!" she repeated. "Surely you are coming with us," and Miss Rochester's white fingers closed almost convulsively over his arm, while her anxious eyes searched his face.

"Yes, I shall not leave you until you are all comfortable somewhere, but——"

"You will not then return?" she cried in a startled tone.

"Yes," he reluctantly admitted, "I did not mean to tell any one of my intention, but since you have suspected it, I may as well own that I am coming back to offer my services as surgeon and physician in the hospitals."

"Oh, pray do not! think of the danger!" Miss Rochester pleaded in tones of distress.

"I have no fear," he said gravely, while he added to himself that it could not matter much to him what danger or fate awaited him, for life had few charms for him without Salome to share it.

"No, perhaps not for yourself," his companion returned, in tremulous tones, "but for the sake of others you should guard your life. If—if anything should happen to you! Oh, Dr. Winthrop, I could not bear it."

She had spoken very rapidly, and almost passionately—

apparently driven on by feelings which she could not control, while the look in her eyes revealed to him just what she had long been trying to make him understand, that he had become all in all to her.

Then all at once, she appeared to become conscious of how much she was betraying. A look of consternation and dismay swept over her face—the rich blood rushed in a crimson tide over cheek, neck, and brow, and the next moment, as if overcome with shame for such an unguarded confession, she dropped her head in graceful humility upon the hand which still clasped his arm, and murmured brokenly.

"Forgive me—forgive me!—I forgot—I did not mean——"

At that instant a door, close by which the young couple were standing in such a suggestive attitude, opened, and Mrs. Rochester appeared upon the scene.

Her face lighted with glad surprise, as, at a glance, she seemed to take in the situation.

It was too late to beat a retreat, for Dr. Winthrop had already seen her, so she thought she might as well take time by the forelock and give the young man to understand that she believed him a happy accepted lover.

"I hope you will pardon me," she said, with a frank, delighted smile, "I would not have intruded had I suspected the nature of this interview; but you will at least allow me to express my pleasure, and offer congratulations."

"Oh, mamma!" burst from Miss Rochester, and then, as if overcome with confusion, she darted through the open door, telling herself with a feeling of triumph, that Dr. Winthrop, having been caught in such a compromising position, could not do otherwise than yield gracefully to his fate and ratify the engagement which both families so much desired.

Dr. Winthrop, whose mind was intent only upon getting safely out of Paris, did not realize that then was the proper time to disclaim the honor which was being thrust upon him. He pitied the fair girl, who had so thoughtlessly betrayed her love for him, and felt that it would perhaps

be best to leave her to make her own explanations to her mother.

So he only bowed gravely in reply to Mrs. Rochester's greeting, though a deep flush swept across his brow; then, ignoring her remark entirely, he said.

"I came this morning to ask Miss Rochester if you and she could be ready to leave Paris at short notice. The city is in such a turbulent state that we all feel it would be best to get away as soon as possible."

"Is it so bad as that?—are we in danger personally?" she asked, growing pale with anxiety.

"I will not deceive you—yes. The people are so excited and unreasonable that there is no knowing what they may do."

"Then let us go at once—I can be ready in less than an hour," said Mrs. Rochester, all her native energy and courage rising to meet this emergency.

"We will if we can—if every avenue is not closed against us," he replied. "Get your trunks packed and be ready when I come, or send for you."

"We will," was the decided answer, "and," with a significant smile, "Sadie is, of course, perfectly willing to be guided by you, now."

He made no reply to this, but took his leave at once, although not in a very comfortable frame of mind, for it was very evident that Mrs. Rochester regarded him as a prospective son-in-law and was very much delighted in the belief.

"Surely Miss Rochester will not allow her mother to imagine that I have made her an offer of marriage; she will of course explain our unfortunate position," he mused, as he went out. "It was very disagreeable, and I am surprised at her for losing her self-possession so completely. I did not imagine that the girl really cared for me in any such way, she has always been so frank and friendly. I did not dream that she would fall in love with me; I half suspected that she was getting fond of Norman."

"Well, since she has fallen in love with you, why shouldn't you marry her? You are free, and you are not

likely to meet another woman so loving and accomplished as Sadie Rochester; and then you could settle at once and forever the vexing question of the Hamilton-Rochester contract," was the question which arose in his mind in answer to his previous musings. He thoroughly believed in Sadie Rochester, never once suspecting that she had been playing a part during all these months. Though he recognized her beauty and many accomplishments, and knew that she would shine in any position, he had an instinctive shrinking from an alliance with her.

But these thoughts could not long remain uppermost in his mind. His chief anxiety now was to get his family to a place of safety, and in this undertaking he was peculiarly fortunate.

Mr. Tillinghast met him soon after he left Mrs. Rochester, and told him that he knew of a couple of families who were going outside the city limits that very evening. They had secured passes through some one in high authority, and were to occupy a portion of a large villa that was almost a palace, on the banks of the Seine, about ten miles out. He believed that Dr. Winthrop might succeed in getting his family and the Rochesters passed out with them.

It was an opportunity to be instantly seized upon. He sought the parties at once. They were very kind and sympathetic, and consented to take the frightened Americans in charge. Everything was arranged with comparative ease, and the next day they were all safely housed in the spacious villa, and delighted to be out of danger.

When Dr. Winthrop had seen them comfortably settled, he informed his mother that he was going to return to Paris to resume his practice in the hospital or wherever he should be most needed.

Madam rebelled violently against this plan.

"You have no right to do it—no right to thus rashly risk your life, especially now," she vehemently asserted with significant emphasis on the last word.

"What is my life?" he demanded bitterly, with a slight quiver of his lips; "and what especial value can it have at this time?"

"Can you ask," his mother inquired, astonished, "when at last you have come to your senses?"

"What do you mean?" he questioned, astonished, in his turn.

"Why, that you are finally going to do the proper thing, and marry Sadie Rochester."

"Who said I was going to marry Miss Rochester? Did she tell you so?" Dr. Winthrop gravely inquired.

"No; of course not. Such an announcement should come from you. But Mrs. Rochester has told me what happened in her drawing-room the other morning. She said that you might not be quite ready to formally announce it, for she could get nothing definite from Sadie; but she was confident that you were engaged."

"Mrs. Rochester is surely very good to arrange everything so comfortably for me," Dr. Winthrop replied with a curling lip, while in his heart there arose a feeling of contempt for Miss Rochester, because she had neglected to set matters straight.

No matter what her own feelings might be, she at least should have exonerated him from the suspicion of having proposed to her and been accepted.

He turned abruptly and left his mother, without attempting to explain further, and returned directly to Paris. Certainly no one could have thought him very lover-like to depart without taking leave of his supposed *fiancée*.

Madam spent the remainder of the day in tears; for the estrangement of her son was a great trial to her, since it proved that he had not forgiven her for the part she had taken against Salome.

Several days passed, and then the terrible crisis came —a crisis the memory of which makes many a Frenchman shudder to-day—and then, before the horrors of the insurrection had fairly begun to subside, there went abroad the paralyzing rumor that cholera had broken out in the doomed city.

Who shall describe the weeks that followed? The terrors of riot and of war were as nothing compared with the onward march of that silent and stealthy foe, that mowed down thousands with its invisible but deadly weapons.

Dr. Winthrop was in Paris through it all, and had thrown himself heart and soul into caring for the perishing ones around him.

He had advised his father and brother to take the family and go to England or Scotland, or to some other healthful resort, where there would be little or no danger of the dread disease.

But his mother obstinately refused to go, while he remained, and of course the other members of the family would not leave her.

Every one else had fled from the villa upon the first rumor of cholera, and Mrs. Rochester would have been glad to follow, but her daughter was as obstinate as Madame Winthrop herself. She had so set her heart upon winning Truman Winthrop, so determined to secure the prize for which she had schemed and humiliated herself, that she resolved to boldly face death rather than run the risk of losing him. Besides, Norman Winthrop was obliged to remain.

So the Winthrops and the Rochesters had the magnificent villa to themselves, and a charming place it was.

It was finely and healthfully situated, and Dr. Winthrop said that if they were bound to remain in France they could not be in a better place. Still he would have much preferred that they should go to Scotland, and it was a continual cause for anxiety to know that they were in danger from the pestilence.

Mr. Tillinghast, too, had refused to leave his friend, but he was also one of those heroes who never think of self, and he had insisted upon going into the hospital to act under the direction of Dr. Winthrop.

But in his enthusiasm he overtaxed himself, and one day he was stricken with the dread disease.

Dr. Winthrop felt as if the "tug of war" had set in, in good earnest. He could not devote himself exclusively to his friend, for the entire care of some of the wards of the hospital devolved upon him during certain hours of each day, while nurses were very scarce, and he found it impossible to secure the constant services of any one in

the private room which he had, by paying an exorbitant price, managed to secure for Tillinghast.

"I must have a nurse and a competent one," he exclaimed, almost in despair, after searching for more than an hour one day, and an hour in the race with death was very precious.

He had just come into one of the wards where he belonged, and was about to begin his rounds, when his eye fell upon a couple of nuns, who were in the habit of coming every day to assist and relieve some of the nurses. They belonged to the order of Gray Nuns, and were clad in the loose and homely garb worn by that sisterhood. But little could be seen of their faces, for they wore the close, gray bonnet, with a wide frill of black tissue plaited about the edge of a little black silk cap worn underneath, and white bandages about their foreheads and chins. The only way that they could be distinguished from each other—for they were of the same height—was by a pair of double-blue glasses which one of them wore.

But they were very helpful, very sweet and gentle in their ways, particularly the sister in blue glasses, who was known as Sister Angela, or "The Angel in Gray," as the poor soldiers and patients soon learned to call her.

CHAPTER XXI.

DR. WINTHROP PASSES THROUGH DEEP WATERS.

"PERHAPS they will know of some one whom I can get to nurse Tillinghast," Dr. Winthrop muttered, as he watched these two Sisters of Mercy flitting from couch to couch, intent only upon relieving the suffering around them.

He had never yet spoken with them, for on his approach they would always modestly withdraw, and stand with bowed heads and crossed hands until he had made his explanation, given his orders to the head nurse, and passed on.

Now, however, he walked directly toward one of them, who was bathing the hot face and hands of a poor fellow who had lost a leg during the insurrection.

Her back was toward him and he did not know which one she was until he stepped beside her and she turned her face to him; then he caught sight of the blue glasses and he saw it was Sister Angela.

"Can I speak with you a moment, Sister?" he inquired in a low tone.

She stepped back, crossed her hands upon her bosom, bowed her head and waited to hear what he had to say.

"My friend has been suddenly stricken down," he began, "I must have a competent nurse at once, or he will die. Do you know of such a one?"

"No, monsieur," she replied, "every nurse in Paris is engaged—see!"—with a sweeping gesture of the hand, though she did not raise her head or her glance—"you have not sufficient help even here, and hundreds are dying outside for the want of proper care."

"Then, what shall I do?" cried Dr. Winthrop, and there was a note of agony in his tone. His friend had

not spared himself for others, and he could not bear that he should die from lack of care.

"Has monsieur no friends who could come to him?" inquired the nun.

"No; none who would be of any service at such a time," and he shivered as he thought of bringing any member of his family into that pest-house. Norman was the only one who occurred to him, and he was needed too much elsewhere to be thought of for a moment.

"Monsieur is very ill?" said the nun inquiringly.

"Very; I fear the worst," he replied, with a heavy sigh.

Sister Angela seemed to be thinking deeply for a moment; then telling him briefly to wait, she went down the ward and talked earnestly with the other nun for a few minutes.

Presently she returned and said:

"I know something of sickness and if *monsieur le docteur* will trust me, I will do the best I can."

"Will you? Can you leave your other duties?" he eagerly cried.

"My duties are those that lie nearest at hand and are the most urgent," she quietly answered, but the low, sweet tones were like music to him, for there was hope in them.

"Thank you," the physician gratefully returned, "you have taken a great load from my heart. When can you come?"

"*Monsieur le docteur* may take me to his friend at once —the need is great; I delay not for anything."

"You are very good," her companion returned in a tone that trembled, for he was deeply moved. Then turning abruptly, he simply bade her "Come."

She followed him to a room at the further end of the ward, where he opened a door and then stood aside to allow her to pass in.

The apartment was very comfortable, cool, and well ventilated, and the windows had been darkened, for the glare of the sun was hot and painful.

Sister Angela passed noiselessly in, glancing toward the patient as she did so. She quietly removed her close

gray bonnet, but Dr. Winthrop, though he tried to do so, could not get even a glimpse of her face, for the plaiting of black silk tissue which was fastened to her cap, still fell close about it.

She went directly to the bedside and looked more closely at the patient.

"He is very low, monsieur," she said to Dr. Winthrop, who was gazing sadly at his friend, while he felt his pulse.

"He is, indeed," he whispered with emotion.

"Has he hot water at his feet and warm flannel about his body?" was the next query. "Ah!" without waiting for a reply, and deftly slipping her hand under the bedclothes to the patient's feet, "the bottle is cold, it must be renewed."

She drew it forth, glided swiftly yet noiselessly from the room, but was back again before he could have thought it possible, and replaced the replenished bottle at the sick man's feet.

She then heated a blanket, which she spread over his body and limbs, after which she turned her attention to his nourishment.

"Ah, this is very badly made," she murmured, as she stirred the arrow-root gruel that stood cold upon the table, and found it full of lumps.

She set about preparing some fresh, and not long after was deftly feeding the almost dying man with a smooth, well-cooked porridge, to which she had added a little brandy.

Dr. Winthrop was greatly relieved as he noticed how efficient she was, and though he did not have much hope that his friend would live, he felt that at least he would henceforth have everything needful done for him.

All day long he was in and out of the room to watch his condition, and give him what personal attention he could. The nurse, though she seldom spoke or even looked at him, obeyed every direction implicitly and intelligently, and toward evening he could detect a slight —a very slight improvement in Tillinghast's condition.

Sister Angela did not spare herself; she renewed the

hot bottles at his feet the moment they began to cool; she kept the heated blanket constantly about his body and administered either nourishment or stimulants every few minutes.

During the night she was just as faithful; not once did she close her eyes to sleep or relax her vigilant care of her charge, and by morning he was more comfortable, if not actually better. But he was so weak, his pulse was so feeble, that Dr. Winthrop did not dare to hope much from the trifling improvement in his condition.

Mr. Tillinghast, however, appeared to have a little more consciousness of the efforts to save him, and eagerly swallowed his nourishment and stimulants, instead of lying, as hitherto, almost indifferent.

"You will be worn out—you must have rest," Dr. Winthrop said to Sister Angela, as the second day of her attendance drew near its close and she was still as unremitting in her attentions as ever.

"Nay; I shall not leave *monsieur le docteur's* friend until he is out of danger, or past all help," she returned quietly but resolutely, and no amount of persuasion could change her decision.

The young man did get better, he continued to rally slowly but steadily, and in a few days Dr. Winthrop was confident that if nothing new developed he would soon recover.

As soon as Sister Angela was assured of this she consented to take her needed rest, and left him at regular intervals for this purpose; but she always returned promptly to her post afterward, and was still the same watchful, careful nurse.

One morning, while she was giving her patient his first really solid breakfast, as he called it, Dr. Winthrop hastily entered the room, his face pale and stern, his brow wrinkled with care and an open note in his hand.

"Sister Angela," he said turning appealingly to her, "would you be willing to go out of the city to care for the sick? I am in a sad strait."

"What is it, dear old fellow?" Tillinghast asked sympathetically, and regarding his friend anxiously.

"My father and Evelyn are both down with the cholera; my mother fears she soon may be, as she is far from well," was the disheartening answer.

"You will go, Sister Angela?" her patient said, turning eagerly to her. "I shall do well enough now with what attention I can get from other nurses; I will be very careful—nothing shall tempt me to be imprudent or impatient. Ah, you must go, for poor Winthrop is hard pressed."

"Of course I do not expect that you will go alone," Dr. Winthrop continued; "I will find other nurses to help you if they can be had, if you will but superintend the care of my friends. I can trust you fully and shall feel that nothing will be neglected under your supervision."

The gentle nun did not reply immediately. She seemed to be gravely considering the matter; but Mr. Tillinghast, who alone could see anything of her face, was sure that he saw a vivid crimson shoot up and lose itself under her ugly bandages as if the proposition was a very distasteful one to her.

"Yes, monsieur, I will go," she at last replied in her usual quiet tones; then she turned back to the bedside and went on feeding her charge though he thought her hand trembled slightly on its way from the plate to the mouth.

"I believe I should have died but for you, Sister Angela," the young man said, when he had finished his breakfast. "I am very grateful. I shall bless you always. Is there not something I can do for you to prove it?"

"Nothing, monsieur; my wants are very few and I need no proof," she answered, but her voice was not quite steady he thought.

"I am sorry," he said gratefully, "for I should be glad to make some thankoffering. My friend tells me that you are called the 'Angel in Gray,' here in the hospital; you have surely proved yourself such to me; may you live long to bless others with your gentle ministrations."

Again a flush swept over what was visible of her face, and her lips parted with a sigh that was something like a sob.

"The poor creature has known some heavy sorrow," the young man thought; "perhaps that was what drove her to

be a nun. I wonder how old she is; nobody can tell with all that cotton-cloth wound about her head and face. She may be forty for all I can tell, but she seems a refined lady. Her voice is sweet and low and cultured; her movements are graceful yet dignified, and her hands are small and beautifully formed."

He continued to watch her curiously while she busied herself about some last cares for his comfort, and then she came to take leave of him, as Dr. Winthrop was anxious to start at once for the villa.

"Good-by," the invalid said, with emotion; "I hope I shall see you some time again, Sister Angela, but if I do not I shall always hold you in grateful remembrance."

She bowed her head in acknowledgment of his gratitude, murmured a benediction over him, and then passed quietly out of the room with Dr. Winthrop.

The young physician felt greatly relieved because she had acceded to his request and tried to express his thanks, but she cut him short in the midst of them.

"Thanks are unnecessary, monsieur; it is my work, my duty," she said. "I go to one, then to another, wherever I am most needed."

"But I think you are hardly strong enough for such work; it is too hard, too wearing for your slight frame."

"But I am well. I shall work while heaven gives me strength, then—God's will be done," was the low-voiced, tremulous reply, and its pathos sent a quick stab of pain through the young physician's heart. There was a certain hopelessness in it that moved him deeply.

He found another woman to go out to the villa with them, he feared she would be hardly suited to the sick-room; still it was the best he could do; and he had to be content.

He tried to engage Sister Angela in conversation on their way thither, but she would not talk. She listened to whatever he had to say with bowed head and clasped hands, and when actually obliged to answer him, she did so in the briefest manner.

Arriving at the villa, Dr. Winthrop found his father alarmingly ill. Evelyn was considerably frightened, but

in no immediate danger. Madame Winthrop was far from well, but did not as yet show any symptoms of the terrible scourge.

Norman Winthrop was doing the best that he could for them all, with the assistance of the servants; but he was greatly relieved by the appearance of his brother and his assistants.

Mrs. Rochester and her daughter had shut themselves in their own rooms as soon as Mr. Winthrop was attacked, and kept aloof as much as possible from every one. They would have been glad now to flee from France at once, if they had not feared they would be overtaken by the plague before they could reach a place of safety.

Sister Angela at once took up her position at the bedside of Mr. Winthrop; but, though she was faithful in the minutest particular and Dr. Winthrop spared no effort to save his father, he died on the next morning after their arrival, and in accordance with the prevailing law, was immediately buried.

This affliction of course made Evelyn worse. Madame Winthrop was at once prostrated, while, before the day was over, Dr. Winthrop was summoned to attend Miss Rochester, who was violently attacked with cramps.

"We must have more help," he said, with pale lips, a little later to Sister Angela. "Where shall I turn for another nurse?"

The faithful nun, after thinking a moment, drew forth a note-book, wrote a few lines, then, tearing a couple of leaves from it, was about to pass them to the physician, when she suddenly seemed to change her mind and, crumpling them in her hand, hastily thrust them into her capacious pocket.

"Could you find No. 15 Rue de ——?" she asked, mentioning a street in an humble quarter of Paris.

"Yes, I can find any place if there is hope of getting a nurse in this terrible emergency," he desperately returned.

"Then go—inquire for Harriet Winter; tell her Sister Angela has need of her and she will come. Hasten, monsieur, for time is precious."

Dr. Winthrop needed no second bidding; he did not

even pause to wonder that the French nun had sent him for a woman with a very American name.

With despair at his heart he flew back to Paris, sparing neither himself nor his horses. He found the street and the woman, Harriet Winter, a black-eyed red-cheeked, pleasant-mannered person, who did not hesitate to obey his summons; and before night she was installed in Miss Rochester's room, and Dr. Winthrop felt that he was fortunate indeed in having secured another nurse second only to Sister Angela herself.

Harriet Winter not only proved very efficient in the sick-room but seemed to fit in everywhere. She assumed the management of the entire household, and the family began to experience a sense of homelike comfort such as they had not known during their residence abroad.

During the two weeks that followed, there were anxious days and nights.

Madame Winthrop went very low into the "valley of the shadow of death," while Evelyn slowly rallied. Then when her mother began to recover, she had a relapse, and at one time her brother thought she was gone beyond recall.

But the faithful nurse would not give her up; she stood over her, even after Dr. Winthrop had said there was no pulse and that all further effort would not avail, and persisted in dropping nourishment mixed with stimulants between her pallid lips.

"It can do no harm, monsieur," she murmured, when he had begged her to desist.

"No, nor any good," he responded moodily; but his voice broke as it suddenly occurred to him that his sister must die without a knowledge of his forgiveness for the great wrong she had done him, and, staggering weakly to a chair, he sank into it, with a groan bowing his face upon his hands.

The overworked man was worn out mentally as well as physically.

A deep quivering sigh broke from the lips of Sister Angela, but aside from a yearning, wistful glance, she paid no heed to him, but continued her ministrations.

One—two hours passed, and still the weary man sat there half asleep, wholly exhausted, while drop by drop the patient nun pressed the stimulating gruel between the girl's hueless lips.

At length she thought that her breathing, which had hardly been perceptible for a long time, had become a trifle stronger. All at once the invalid appeared to swallow naturally. A faint sigh broke upon Sister Angela's ears, the girl moved her head slightly on her pillow, and then sunk into a natural slumber.

A wan little smile flitted over the nurse's lips, as she noiselessly placed her cup and spoon on the table beside her and glanced at that other sleeping figure across the room.

She would not arouse him from the blessed rest, for she knew her good news could wait; but when at last she saw he was awake she glided softly to his side, and said in a scarcely audible tone.

"Monsieur, take courage, I think your sister will live."

Dr. Winthrop started to his feet, a dazed look on his worn face; then he moved quickly to Evelyn's side, and at the first glance his practiced eye told him that there had been a decided change for the better.

From that time until morning dawned, he never left her side, and when the sun arose, he felt almost as if his sister had been given back to him from the dead.

But their trials were by no means over, for during that day one of the servants died, and Miss Rochester appeared to be sinking. But what need to dwell upon those wretched experiences? upon the almost superhuman effort of Dr. Winthrop to save the precious lives in his charge; of the faithfulness of those tireless nurses, who neglected nothing, and yet exercised the utmost care over their own health for the sake of their patients.

Those were experiences that could never be forgotten, but they could not endure forever, and when those who had been so near the borders of the other world began to recover, and Dr. Winthrop pronounced them out of danger, Sister Angela and Harriet Winter were relieved by two other women, and sent away for needful rest.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN APPALLING DISCOVERY.

MEANTIME, Mr. Tillinghast had been steadily gaining, and when all fear of any further danger from the scourge was past, Dr. Winthrop arranged that he should come out to the villa to spend a week or two, to gain a little more strength, after which he contemplated sending him to some healthful resort with the other invalids who were now rapidly convalescing.

They were all sitting together one evening, talking of the terrible epidemic, whose force was gradually becoming exhausted, and of the wonderful escape which they, as a family, had had, when Madame Winthrop feelingly remarked:

"I suppose very few have had the care which we have received; that old maid, Harriet, was a treasure of a nurse while Sister Angela was a perfect wonder. She seemed to know by instinct just the right thing to do. I do not believe she made a single mistake while she was here."

"The 'Angel in Gray,'" murmured Mr. Tillinghast, a look of reverence sweeping over his still thin face, and then he told them how she had been beloved in the hospital, and why she had been called so.

They were all enthusiastic in their praises—all save Dr. Winthrop, who had been lying wearily back in his chair, evidently too inert and indifferent to join in any conversation.

He could not seem to recover his normal strength and vigor, after the strain of those terrible weeks, and his friends were very anxious about him; yet not more so than usual upon this particular evening, and no one

thought it strange when, after a while, he arose and quietly passed out of the room.

His friend, Tillinghast, however, thinking he might have gone out for a smoke, followed him after a few moments, and found him in the dining-room mixing something in a tumbler.

"Thirsty, True?" he began, then suddenly catching sight of his ghastly face, he exclaimed, "Good heavens, Winthrop! what ails you?"

"I am afraid my turn has come at last," Dr. Winthrop replied, as he swallowed the potion of brandy at one gulp. "I have felt some pain all the afternoon and have been treating myself; but, in spite of all, I believe the disease has a grip on me."

"Cholera?" gasped his friend, a look of terror on his face.

"Yes, and no light attack, either."

A spasm of agony convulsed his features as he spoke, and he sank weakly upon the nearest chair.

"What shall I do for you, True?" his companion asked. "We must not delay—man! man! tell me—what shall I do?"

This last appeal was made in great alarm, as Dr. Winthrop seemed on the verge of losing consciousness.

"Send some one for Sister Angela at once, then get me to bed as soon as possible, with hot bottles and blankets," the young physician feebly directed.

The whole household was aroused immediately, and everybody was greatly frightened, for Dr. Winthrop seemed to be their mainstay and bulwark of defense.

But he continued to grow rapidly and alarmingly worse, and by the time Sister Angela arrived with a skilful physician, whom she had called upon her own responsibility, he was almost in a state of insensibility.

It was fortunate for the gentle nun that she had had ample time to rest and recruit her strength before having to meet this fresh ordeal, for Dr. Winthrop was a very sick man, and Mr. Tillinghast regretted that he had not tried to secure the services of a strong man as nurse, instead of this apparently frail woman.

He proposed, the morning after her arrival, going for one.

"No," she returned, with quiet resolution: "I can do better for him than any man, if you will help me when he needs to be moved or lifted."

The poor man now had to reap the results of the terrible strain through which he had so recently passed, for he went alarmingly near the borders of the other world. He was delirious most of the time, and talked almost incessantly of Sister Angela and some one else, whom he called his "darling;" though his mutterings were so indistinct and incoherent that they could not make much sense of what he said.

"To whom does he refer?" Sister Angela asked of his mother one day, when he called more than usual for his "darling."

Madame Winthrop flushed at the question, for she well knew to whom he referred, and her conscience had been busy with its upbraidings as she listened to her son's ravings.

But of course she was not going to tell family secrets to a stranger, and so evaded a direct reply.

"He is betrothed to Miss Rochester," she said, briefly.

The cup from which Sister Angela had been feeding her patient slipped from her fingers just then, but fortunately it dropped upon a hassock and made no noise.

"Miss Sadie Rochester, the young lady whom the other nurse took care of when you were here before," she explained.

"Miss Sadie Rochester!" repeated the nun.

"Yes; did not the nurse tell you her name?" asked madam.

"No; I have scarcely seen her since; she was called away elsewhere," murmured Sister Angela.

"Are you ill, sister?" madam inquired a moment later, as she noticed that she pressed her hand to her side as if in sudden pain.

"No; it was only a sudden pain; it will soon pass," she explained.

"You must be careful; you must not neglect yourself,"

returned madam, kindly; "for I do not know what we should do without you. Oh, save my son! he is my idol! It would kill me to lose him. Save him, and I shall bless you all the days of my life!" and the woman, still somewhat weak from her own recent illness, wept and broke down utterly as she looked upon the unconscious sufferer.

The nun did not reply for a moment, then lifting her clasped hands, which were locked in a vise-like grip, to her bosom, she said, brokenly:

"God rules! I know not if he can live; but, if human care can avail, he—shall not die!"

Madam thought her very sympathetic, and then after asking if she needed anything for her comfort, went away to her own room for the night.

The door had scarcely closed behind her when Sister Angela sank upon her knees beside the bed and buried her face in her hands, while convulsive, yet low sobs shook her slight form from head to foot.

She was so absorbed in the emotion that had overcome her that she was oblivious of all else, until, all at once, she felt a touch upon her head, and a feeble voice murmured:

"My darling! my darling!"

A quiver ran over her frame; she lifted her face and gazed upon her patient.

But he did not appear to be conscious of her presence; his eyes were partially unclosed and he seemed to be looking off into vacancy, as if he saw some one beyond her.

His hand had slipped from her head, as she raised it, and now lay upon the bed before her. As if seized with some sudden impulse, which she could not control, she leaned forward and pressed her lips passionately upon it, a pitiful sob bursting from them as she did so.

It was a strange—a very strange thing for a Sister of Mercy to do; but there was no eye to see the act, and even her charge himself did not notice it.

She soon recovered herself, however, and arose from her kneeling position, murmuring:

"God is merciful, He will not let him die."

A little later, while she was feeding him, she heard the

door behind her softly open again, and turning she saw a white robed figure standing in the aperture.

She stood as if paralyzed a moment; then a low, startled exclamation broke from her.

"Hush!" said the intruder, holding up a warning hand. "I do not wonder you are startled, for I suppose I look like a ghost, but I could not sleep without knowing just how he is to-night."

The nurse turned back to the bedside, as Miss Rochester advanced into the room, noiselessly closing the door after her, and then came and stood beside the man, whose wife she coveted to be, but who lay very near death at that moment.

"What do you think of him?" she asked, trying in vain to get a view of the nun's averted face.

"No better—no worse," she briefly replied, in a muffled tone.

"Thank Heaven he is no worse!" the girl said, with a sigh. "Do you think he can possibly rally?"

"I—hope so; he has a strong constitution."

"You will do your best, I know," Miss Rochester said, earnestly; "you have done your best through all our trouble here. I have heard of your wonderful faithfulness and powers of endurance, and I have longed to see you. I suppose it is not just proper for me to come here to-night—mamma would scold if she knew it; but I had to come to see for myself just how he is. How dreadful he looks!—how pinched and ghastly his face!—how thin and white his hands! I—I suppose you know that I—expect to be his—wife—if he lives," she concluded, with a conscious glance toward the nun, as if she thought this apology for her presence was necessary.

Sister Angela made no reply; but Miss Rochester thought she saw her shiver, and a flush dyed her cheek.

"I suppose it sounds strangely to you to hear me speak of marriage with one who seems so near death," she said; "but I thought you ought to know why I came, and it is natural that I should be anxious."

Then regarding her companion more closely, she asked, curiously:

"What is the matter with your eyes, sister? Why do you wear those queer double spectacles?"

"Hush! Mademoiselle must not remain longer—it will disturb monsieur, if we talk," the nurse returned, without looking at her, and ignoring her question; "besides, mademoiselle will take cold, and be in danger of another attack herself."

And walking quietly to the door, she opened it, and waited for the girl to pass out.

Miss Rochester dared not disobey this unmistakable dismissal, and after bestowing one more look upon the unconscious sufferer, she went softly out, whispering, with an appealing glance:

"Save him, I beseech you, Sister, and I shall be eternally grateful; you little know how much depends upon his life."

"My darling—my darling," murmured the invalid, stirring uneasily upon his pillow.

Hastily closing the door upon the unceremonious intruder, Sister Angela flew back to her post by the bed, but with face and lips white as the spotless bandage about her brow, and shivering as with the ague.

The next day there was a slight improvement in Dr. Winthrop's condition, then the symptoms were discouraging; after that the crisis came, was passed, and then there was a perceptible gain.

A week later he was improving rapidly—another passed and he was able to sit up; then seeing how worn and thin his mother and Evelyn were again looking, from the anxiety which they had suffered upon his account, he insisted that they should go to some watering-place to recuperate for a few weeks.

Mrs. Rochester, who alone, with the exception of Norman Winthrop, had escaped the terrible scourge, said she would remain and direct the household until they were able to return.

She tried to persuade her daughter to accompany them, but Miss Rochester, feeling that the period of convalescence might prove to be an impressionable one with Dr. Winthrop, refused to go, and fondly hoped that the next

two or three weeks would decide her destiny beyond all question.

Dr. Winthrop still retained Sister Angela, although she had several times spoken of returning to Paris, since he had become so much better. He was opposed to her leaving him, however—he had pleaded for "just a week longer," saying that she was so helpful, her presence so soothing—not to mention the preparation of certain dainties with which she was continually tempting his appetite—that he could not give her up just yet; and so she remained.

The week soon slipped by, the last day came, and Sister Angela seemed strangely agitated and depressed. Dr. Winthrop thought he had never seen her so nervous or so absent-minded, and blamed himself for requiring the service of this extra week, when she was so nearly worn out from constant attendance.

She went down as usual to prepare something especially nice for his dinner—the last meal she would take up to him—and, having finished her work and arranged everything temptingly upon a tray, she slowly mounted the stairs on her way to his room with it in her hands.

She had reached the top stair when a sudden dizziness seized her, an icy chill ran over her frame, and she had barely time to set her tray upon the floor when she fell prone beside it in a dead faint.

The sound of her fall drew Mrs. Rochester and her daughter from their room—for she had fallen just opposite their door—to see what had happened.

Dr. Winthrop's room was some distance from the spot, and part way down another passage, so that the confusion attending Sister Angela's mishap—fortunately or unfortunately—did not reach his ears and he knew nothing of it until afterward.

"Mercy! it is that nun!" exclaimed Miss Rochester, who was first to reach the unconscious girl, while she gazed with startled and curious eyes upon her prostrate form.

"She is worn out," said Mrs. Rochester, as she dropped upon her knees and began to loosen the bandages about

Sister Angela's face, and tore her close black cap from her head, thus revealing a wealth of beautiful black hair.

"Why, she looks like——" she began, then suddenly checking herself, she quickly removed the double blue glasses which had always so effectually concealed her eyes.

A cry of astonishment and dismay burst from her lips, which had lost every atom of color.

"S—adie!" she gasped, lifting a pair of wild eyes to her daughter's face.

"For goodness' sake, mamma, what is the matter?" inquired the girl, who had not yet had a full view of the features thus exposed to view.

"Look!" whispered the mother, hoarsely.

She bent down to look into that still, white face; then she lifted her glance, and those two women gazed into each other's eyes with speechless amazement and unmistakable terror.

"Mamma! it is—it is——" began Miss Rochester, looking as if she herself was on the verge of fainting.

"SALOME!" whispered the elder woman, with a gasp of terror.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SALOME LEARNS A STARTLING FACT.

YES, lying there upon the floor, all unconscious of her condition or surroundings, or of the fact that her identity was discovered, lay the wife of Truman Winthrop.

It was indeed Salome, fair and beautiful as when Dr. Winthrop had held her in his arms on the morning of his sudden departure for Europe, though she was somewhat worn and thin from long watching and anxiety; for these last few weeks, during which the man whom she so fondly loved had lain so low, had been a severe strain upon both heart and strength.

Mrs. Rochester and her daughter hung trembling over her, astonishment, consternation, and even terror depicted upon their blanched faces, and both seemingly too unnerved by their appalling discovery to know what to do in such an emergency.

"She was not burned to death after all," Miss Rochester at length whispered, tremulously, as she bent closer for a better view of the girl; "and how on earth did she happen to be in Paris at this time, or to get into this family?"

"That is easily enough explained," returned Mrs. Rochester, beginning to recover herself, while her face grew hard and stern. "She must have escaped from that building without being seen, and has probably been hiding ever since for some reason—perhaps because she was piqued and believed that her marriage was illegal, as they told her. But she has doubtless kept herself posted regarding the movements of the Winthrops, and so followed them here, to be near him. Then, of course, since she is such a natural-born nurse, it was easy enough for her to get into almost any hospital, where, disguised in this

outlandish manner, her own mother would never have recognized her; and, having nursed Tillinghast through his illness with such success, it is not at all wonderful that Dr. Winthrop should have wanted her to come here. But"—with a sudden compression of her lips—"what are we going to do about the matter, now that we have made the discovery?"

"Well, to begin with, let us get her out of this hall—take her at once to my room," said Miss Rochester, a cruel light leaping into her beautiful eyes; "and you understand, mamma," she added, "we must keep her out of sight—no one must see her or know what we know, and just as soon as possible she must be got out of the house. What do you suppose is to become of us—of my future interests—if Truman Winthrop discovers that his wife is living?"

"What is to become of your future interests whether he learns it or not, since the fact remains that she does live?" bitterly demanded her mother.

"Oh, I don't know; I must have time to think. Mamma, she must not be allowed to spoil everything now. But come—help me, and, let us get her out of sight at once."

She seized Salome by the shoulders, and Mrs. Rochester lifting her by the feet, they bore her into their private parlor and laid her upon the lounge.

Then Mrs. Rochester said that Dr. Winthrop must have his dinner or he would suspect that something was wrong. So she took the daintily arranged tray, which fortunately had not been disturbed, and carried it herself to his room, remarking that as Sister Angela appeared not very well, she had prevailed upon her to lie down, and allow her to take her place, and serve his dinner.

Dr. Winthrop did not manifest any suspicion that all was not as represented, and thought it very kind of Mrs. Rochester to be so considerate of the nurse.

Then she made her escape back to her own rooms as soon as possible, but found that Salome had not yet revived. Miss Rochester had made no effort to restore her.

"Your future interests," she resumed, as if that thought had been in her mind ever since her daughter suggested it. "Surely you do not expect to marry Dr. Winthrop after making this discovery."

"Why not?"

Mrs. Rochester shrugged her shoulders, and made a significant grimace.

"Bigamy," was all the reply that she vouchsafed.

Miss Rochester frowned at the disagreeable word.

"It is probable that no one, save you and me, know of her existence, or rather her identity," she remarked, after a thoughtful pause.

"Well, what of that?" demanded her companion; "she can reveal herself whenever she chooses."

"That is the very thing I am afraid of; but there are places where people can have no communication with the outside world, and Paris is very prolific in such institutions," said Miss Rochester, in a tone to make one's flesh creep.

"Sadie! you wouldn't dare," whispered her mother.

"I would dare anything rather than lose all at this late day," was the passionate retort.

"But you couldn't marry him even then—you know that would be absolutely impossible, even though she could be so securely shut away that she could never make her existence known," returned Mrs. Rochester, decidedly.

"Listen, mamma," said the girl, imperiously, "I have set my heart on this marriage and the union of these two fortunes, and you know when I really make up my mind to anything I usually carry my point. Do you think that, after enjoying all the luxuries which this money buys for us, I am weakly going to surrender them? Can you live without your silks, satins, laces, jewels, horses, carriages; your servants, and the hundred other things you enjoy so much, and go back to the poverty you struggled with before you married a rich man? No, you cannot," she went on, as her companion shivered over the picture, "but you know that we are to have only the interest of that paltry fifty thousand to use jointly if that contract is not fulfilled."

"But—but—think of Dr. Winthrop becoming a bigamist!"

"I do not intend that Dr. Winthrop shall become a bigamist," calmly responded the young lady.

"How can you prevent it if you persist in going through the form of marriage—provided, of course, you can win him—since Salome is already his wife; unless—" and the woman's face grew deadly pale; "you are meditating a worse crime——"

"Hush!" and Miss Rochester's eyes blazed dangerously, "what could have put such a horrible idea into your mind? But what I mean to do is this: I mean to put her," with a glance at the still form, "where she can do no harm by tattling, at least for the present. Then I shall write to a New York lawyer that I am engaged to Dr. Winthrop; but since his first wife's body was never recovered from the ruins of that building, I am in constant fear lest she should be living, and sometimes appear to cause me trouble. Of course, I shall represent to him that I realize it is only a morbidly nervous fear, still, to satisfy me, I want him to procure regular divorce papers, as if she were living and had simply disappeared—all to be done without publicity of course, as lawyers nowadays know how to do such things. This will, no doubt, cost a great deal of money and require some ingenuity to manage, but they understand how to meet such difficulties, and we need not mind a few thousands if we can but secure the bulk of those fortunes."

"Well, I must admit, Sadie, you would do credit to the arch-plotter himself!" her mother exclaimed; "as inventive as I am, I should never have thought of such a device; but"—meditatively—"I believe it can be done. Still there will be great risks to be run, even if you succeed in securing the doctor, while, if he should ever mistrust anything afterward, I should not envy you your future happiness. Suppose he should some time learn that you had applied for this divorce?"

"Well, then I could admit to him, as to the lawyer, that I simply did it to satisfy my own conscience, and to prevent any possibility of illegality in our marriage."

"Then, too," persisted Mrs. Rochester, still doubtful of the feasibility of the plot, "suppose Salome should manage to escape some time; she might—she would be very likely to make trouble for you."

"Let her! once I am Mrs. Truman Winthrop, I will snap my fingers at whatever trouble she might try to make. I shall be so secure in my position that I shall not fear her at all," returned Miss Rochester, confidently.

"Really, Sadie, you have greatly relieved my mind upon one point," her mother thoughtfully observed. "I have been very much afraid all along that you were going to throw Dr. Winthrop over entirely, out of admiration, if not of some stronger sentiment, for his brother."

Miss Rochester flushed a vivid scarlet at this unexpected turn to the conversation.

"Well," she frankly admitted, after a moment of silence, "I must admit that I wish Norman Winthrop had been Milton Hamilton's favorite nephew and heir; he is far more congenial in some respects than his very dignified and extremely conscientious brother; but since he hasn't a sufficient fortune to tempt me, and I am bound to have money, I must put up with the other——"

"Hush!" her mother interrupted at this point; "she is coming to herself," and she pointed to the figure upon the lounge, which just then began to stir feebly.

Suspended animation was gradually reasserting itself in Salome; a long-drawn sigh heaved her breast, and then she slowly opened her eyes and looked around her.

Mrs. Rochester and her daughter were seated together, not far from the head of the lounge, and thus the reviving girl could not see them as she began to come to herself.

They made no sound nor movement, but sat watching to see what she would do or say when she should entirely recover consciousness.

"Where am I? what has happened?" Salome murmured, as her wandering eyes rested upon objects which she had never seen before.

She had never been in those rooms, and had only now and then met their occupants as she passed to and fro through the halls on her duties, or when they came for a

moment to Dr. Winthrop's door to inquire how he was. She had never exchanged a word with either of them, except on that night when Miss Rochester had stolen in upon her when her patient was so ill.

An expression of surprise stole into her eyes, and she put her hand in a confused way to her head, when she was startled to find that her cap and bandages had all been removed; her glasses, too, were gone. A feeling of fear and dismay seized her.

"Why, why!" she cried, in a tone of distress; then she struggled to a sitting posture, and looked about her with a frightened stare.

Instantly she encountered the sullen glances of the two women who were watching her.

"Ah!—Mrs. Rochester!" she gasped.

"Yes, that is my name, Miss Howland—or perhaps you would prefer to be addressed by your latest alias, 'Sister Angela,'" that lady sarcastically remarked.

"Really, Salome, you have not shown your usual good taste by masquerading in that ugly gray costume," said Miss Rochester, with a sneer. "I confess," she added, "it has been an excellent disguise, since neither mamma nor I have been able to penetrate it, until you were so unfortunate as to faint just outside our door a few minutes ago."

"Oh, you will not betray me——" Salome began, appealingly.

"Betray you!—to whom?" sternly demanded Mrs. Rochester.

"To my—to Dr. Winthrop," murmured the distressed girl, as she tried to replace her disguise with her trembling hands, and looked around for her glasses.

"To your husband—I suppose you were about to remark," cried Miss Rochester, with a sneering laugh. "In my presence I hope you will not thus speak of the man to whom I am betrothed. Your husband! Pshaw! Have you not been told that your marriage with him was but a farce?"

Salome shivered. Every word that the cruel girl had uttered had pierced her sensitive heart like a dagger.

"Don't—don't!" she breathed, and her teeth began to chatter with the nervous chill that was creeping over her.

Ever since Madame Winthrop had told her that she was no wife she had been crushed and humiliated by the thought that she had been living in a false position. She could have borne it quietly and patiently if Dr. Winthrop had shown a desire to shield her; if he had but written to her that, to all intents and purposes, she was his wife—that he felt morally bound to her, even though there might have been some technical flaw in their union; if he had but told her to remain where she was and he would make everything right when he returned. But instead of doing this—instead of proving the true, noble man she had believed him, he had shown himself to be weak; he had allowed himself to be influenced by his proud mother's view of the situation, and had sent her out of his home, as if she had been some shameful character, whose presence there would bring opprobrium upon him, and this had crushed her.

Time had only served to increase her suffering and sensitiveness upon this point, and she had tried—when the opportunity offered—to drop quietly out of the world.

She was too innocent and unsuspecting—too ignorant of all legal questions to imagine for a moment that she had been deceived—to reason that the simple fact of Dr. Winthrop having taken vows in the presence of witnesses, or having installed her in his home as his wife in the presence of his servants, would establish her position according to the laws of New York, even though there might have been some informality about their union which might have seriously affected it in other States. Neither had it occurred to her to take advice upon the subject and try to obtain redress. She had simply believed what she had been told, and then, imagining that her husband was ashamed and regretted the alliance, she had resolved to take herself forever out of his way.

"I do not wonder you are ashamed," continued Miss Rochester, as she remarked Salome's emotion; "and yet, in spite of all, you have come here and forced yourself upon him."

"I did not—oh, I did not!" Salome murmured, a burning blush suffusing her face; "but he was in such trouble, I could not resist the desire to come. His friend was dying, and he could get no one to nurse him. I knew I could give him good care, even if I could not save him, and so, when he appealed to me, I yielded. Then he asked me to come here. Oh, it was hard—no one will ever know how hard—but he needed me, and I would have given my life for him——"

"Very likely," interrupted Miss Rochester, with a sarcastic sneer; "but that costly sacrifice has not been required of you. And now, since your identity has been revealed, it is but natural that I should object to your remaining longer in the capacity of nurse to the man whom I expect to marry."

Salome's face grew deadly white again at this poisoned shaft; but she drew herself up with dignity.

"Your objection would have no weight with me. I should remain if I considered it my duty to do so," she said coldly.

"Perhaps it has been your intention to reveal yourself to Doctor Winthrop and try to ingratiate yourself with him again," was the rude retort.

"No, no!" Salome cried, trembling with fear at the thought, and trying to adjust her disguise more securely, while she searched again for her glasses. "He must never know that I have been here!"

"Ah, then you have some sense of shame! I am glad to know that you do not wish to thrust yourself upon him again, after having once been discarded from his home——"

"Stop! oh, stop!" Salome interrupted, as she tottered to her feet in her agony, putting out her hand appealingly at this taunt. "I have never wanted to thrust myself upon him; but I was wild when they came and told me that he had at last fallen a prey to the disease from which he had saved so many; he himself sent for me, and I had to come. I have saved him—a second time I have saved his life—my work is done, and I will go. I had told him I was going to-day," she concluded; but her

lips were livid with agony at the thought of again leaving the man whom she still loved with all the strength of her soul.

"Where will you go?" demanded Mrs. Rochester.

"Back to my work in the hospitals and among the poor, when I am a little rested," the wretched girl replied, but with such a sense of utter desolation as she had never before experienced.

"Are you really a nun? Have you taken convent vows upon you?" suddenly inquired Miss Rochester, as it occurred to her that if she had regularly devoted herself to the life, that fact might of itself make her marriage with Dr. Winthrop null and void.

But she was destined to be disappointed, for Salome briefly answered:

"No."

"Then why have you assumed their dress—why do you masquerade in their robes?"

"To protect myself—it gives me security and liberty in going about my work, for no one dares molest or ill-treat a nun."

"How do you happen to be in Paris at this time?" Miss Rochester demanded, regarding her with suspicion.

"Excuse me; but I am not accountable to you for my movements," Salome responded coldly.

Miss Rochester gave a mocking laugh.

"It is very easy to interpret them, nevertheless," she sneered. "A certain physician was known to be in Paris, and you could not keep away from him. Yours is an exceedingly romantic story, Salome—even you do not dream how romantic. I am willing to wager a handsome sum against those ugly glasses of yours, that you don't know just who Dr. Winthrop is after all," and she regarded the girl with a malicious look.

"What do you mean?" Salome asked, with undisguised astonishment.

"You have never had a suspicion, I suppose," her tormentor went on, "that the handsome doctor may have had as romantic a history as your own? Did no one ever tell you that he was betrothed to another at the time you

lured him into that hasty and unfortunate marriage in Boston?"

Salome's white lips quivered painfully!—how cruel they were to taunt her thus with all her misery.

"Yes—madam told me," she faltered.

"Did she tell you to whom he was betrothed! No, of course she did not, or you would not look so innocent and curious," Miss Rochester went on relentlessly. "It is the strangest story in the world—the most wonderful complication I ever heard of—and you were always a marplot Salome——"

"Tell me—tell me," interposed Salome, with quivering eagerness, "and do not keep me in this torturing suspense. What do you mean? what is there strange or mysterious about him?—to whom was he betrothed?"

"To my husband's daughter—to Sadie Rochester," cried Mrs. Rochester, turning a vindictive look upon the unhappy and trembling girl, "and the man whom you have fondly supposed to be your husband and lost, is no other than Truman Hamilton, the adopted son and heir of Milton Hamilton, who decreed that he should marry the daughter of his friend or—forfeit his inheritance!"

Salome had risen to her feet as if electrified at the woman's first words, and she had seemed to freeze where she stood, as she went on—a look first of incredulity, then horror, then despair overspreading her colorless face.

Then, as the full force of all that she had learned burst upon her, a low cry of anguish broke from her, she swayed dizzily for a moment where she stood, and then sank back upon the couch, from which she had just risen, and fainted away again.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A BACKWARD GLANCE.

IT will be necessary now to go back a little, in order to learn how Salome happened to be in Paris during the raging of the plague, which slew its hundreds and thousands, and yet so mercifully passed her by. We saw her last just driving away in a carriage from the home from which she believed herself to have been driven by the man she loved. She took nothing with her save the one trunk containing the simple wardrobe which she had brought from Boston, and she ordered the driver to take her directly to the Grand Central Depot.

This, however, was only done to conceal her movements, for she had no intention of leaving New York.

After paying and dismissing her carriage, she purchased a newspaper at a stand; then, going into the ladies' room she sat down and began to peruse the various columns of advertisements. She soon found what she wanted—an advertisement of a respectable lodging-house for working girls. She had resolved to hide herself in the city for a while, until she could rest and recruit a little from the weakness which her recent unhappiness and excitement had occasioned her.

She engaged a second carriage, had her trunk transferred from the baggage-room, and was then driven to the street and number where the lodging-house was.

Here she registered her name as S. Howland, engaged the only single room to be had, and paid a full month's rent in advance.

It was at one end of a long hall, small, but clean and comfortably furnished. There was only one window in it, and this overlooked a narrow passage between the lodging-house and another empty building, which seemed

so near that she believed she could reach out and touch it if she tried.

She did not mind its location, or that it was a gloomy and unpleasant place in which to live; she scarcely gave a thought to her surroundings, so sore was her heart, so weary her body and mind. All that she cared for was to be by herself, to rest until she could gain strength to look her fate calmly in the face and plan what to do.

She went directly to bed, and, utterly exhausted with grief and weariness, fell at once into a profound slumber.

For several days she could do little but sleep and rest, for tired nature would assert its claims, and the sense of security which she experienced in her little room was conducive to this.

She paid one of the chambermaids to bring her, from a neighboring restaurant, such simple food as she knew she required and must eat, and did not go out at all herself, nor interest herself in her neighbors or anything going on about her.

She was broken-hearted. She could not be reconciled to the terrible blight that had fallen upon her life—she could not be reconciled to the fact that her husband had refused to accept her explanations, in the letter of confession which she had written him, and should have so curtly commanded her to leave his home.

Had she not been so crushed and confused by Madame Winthrop's and Evelyn's accusations and arguments—had she not been so morbidly sensitive, she would have reasoned better; she would have known that a man of Dr. Winthrop's stamp would have explained himself more fully in a letter.

She had, indeed, at first, thought she would wait for one, then she told herself that she never could bear to read it when it came; for she believed he would never have told her to go away from the beautiful home to which he had brought her if he meant to ratify the union between them. She felt that it would dethrone her reason to be told that, since there was no legal bond, he thought it best for them to part, and then perhaps offer to settle a sum of money upon her to atone for the disappointment and wrong.

She had read of such a case only a little while before, and, in her excited state, imagined that her fate would be but a repetition of that sad story. And so she had told herself that she could not stay to be so humiliated—she would not remain in a family where she was not wanted—it would be better to sever all ties, and go at once.

"I will stay here and rest until I get stronger, and then I will go back to my former work, as nurse in one of the hospitals," she mused while thinking over her future. "If I cannot be happy myself—and everything seems opposed to it, I can at least try to do some good in the world by ministering to others. It seems as if fate has ordained that I shall be a nurse in spite of everything."

She thought, at first, of returning to Boston, and of applying again at the hospital there. But she shrank from having the superintendent, good Dr. Hunt, and the nurses with whom she had been associated, know of her blighted hopes.

She had money, for she had spent little of the sum which Dr. Winthrop had given her, and so she told herself that she might rest as long as she wished, before taking up her work again—might take plenty of time to school herself to meet and bear the struggle before her.

Then came that terrible experience by fire—an ordeal which she would never forget.

She had retired very early that night, for she had been suffering all day from a nervous headache; but she did not go to sleep readily—indeed, she seemed to grow more nervous and strangely restless, after extinguishing her light.

She bore it as long as she could, then arose and took an anodyne. Fifteen minutes later, she was sleeping soundly—far too soundly for her own good, for she heard nothing of what was going on around her, when the alarm of fire was given.

She had a strange dream, however. She thought that she was back again in her beautiful home; that she was sleeping in her own pretty curtained bed, when she was suddenly awakened and found Madame Winthrop and Evelyn

standing over her, the latter holding her hands, while the former bound and gagged her. She struggled and fought against them, but all to no purpose, for they were much stronger than she, and then all at once a sense of suffocation came over her, and she really awoke, to find her room full of smoke and herself gasping for breath.

She sprang out of bed and deluged her face with water. This revived her, and seizing her blanket-wrapper from the chair where she had thrown it on retiring, she slipped it on, thrust her feet into a pair of felt slippers, and flew to open her door, only to be met and forced back by a torrent of smoke that was red with flame. To her horror, she saw that the greater portion of the floor between her room and the stairway had been burned away, and the fire was leaping fiercely toward her.

She wondered if everybody else had escaped, and blamed herself for having taken so heavy a sleeping potion. She listened, and thought she could catch the sound of low moans and cries above the crackling of the flames; but she could not tell which room they came from, and she knew that she could do nothing to help any one else, even if she could save herself.

Back she went into her room, shutting out the hot flame and smoke, and sped to the window, hoping to find aid there. She could hear cries and shouts around the other side of the building, but there was no one in the narrow passage beneath her.

She screamed for help; but the wall of brick before her only gave back mocking echoes in reply, and just then an intense heat about her feet made her look back into the room, and she saw that little puffs of smoke were beginning to curl up from the carpet.

"Must I perish here alone? Must I die such a horrible death?" she cried, with a sinking heart, as she turned again to the window, gasping for breath.

Just then a window in the opposite wall caught her eye, and she saw it was almost on a level with her own, although diagonally across.

"If there was anything with which I could make a bridge, I could escape even now by that window," she thought.

Oh, joy! She suddenly remembered that a man had been papering the hall only the day before, but had not been able to finish it, and so had left his cutting-board leaning against the wall. If it were not already in flames she might make use of that, for surely it would be ample in length.

She folded a wet towel about her mouth and nose, and sprang forth into the hall, to see if the board was still there.

Yes; she could distinguish one end of it, and it had not yet taken fire, for it lay close against the wall.

She groped her way to it, seized it, and, though it was hot and burned her fingers, dragged it through her room to the open window. Then using all her strength she shoved it out toward that other window.

Would it reach across?

The distance seemed greater than she at first thought.

Yes, it would span the space, but the other window was closed!

Oh, how hot and stifling her room was getting! she was panting, and a feeling of faintness began to come over her.

She drew back the board a little, then, with an energy born of despair, she sent the end of it crashing through the glass, which, fortunately, was a broad pane, and then —she had her bridge!

Would she dare traverse it, walking in mid-air at such a fearful height?

Her brain grew dizzy with the thought.

But there was no time for delay, or a weak yielding to fear, for to remain many minutes longer where she was would be certain death. It would be hazardous to try to cross, for a single misstep would send her to no less certain destruction; but there was no alternative.

"Oh, I wish I could know if there is any one else in such a strait!" she cried, as she thought she could still detect muffled moans; but she knew it would be worse than useless for her to gain an entrance into any other of the rooms, through those waves of rolling fire in the hall, and so she tried to quell the sickening horror that was

creeping over her, and give her mind entirely to her own condition.

She darted to the bed and snatched her purse from beneath her pillow; then back again to the window, where she leaped upon a chair, and then stepped upon the board.

Once, twice, thrice, she made an effort to move on, but terror held her paralyzed. She could not move her feet, each seemed to weigh a ton, and she could not lift them.

She grew dizzy, faint, sick, at the thought of crossing even that little space at such a fearful height.

But sure death was behind her, for, as she looked back into her room, she could see flames instead of smoke leaping up through the floor.

"I must! I must!" she moaned; then, with one look above, and one cry for help, she took a step forward, another and yet another, when, as she found that she must let go her hold upon her window, she threw her other hand wildly toward the one opposite, and—kind Heaven! what a thrill of joy ran through her, arousing all her courage, energy, and hope!—her fingers suddenly came in contact with a wire!

It was the lower wire of a line of telegraph that ran directly through the passage.

She had noticed it often, but had not thought of it until that moment as a means of help to her.

She clutched it eagerly, and steadying herself by it went on, gaining courage with every step, for the wire was not very taut and yielded to support her on her way.

Half a dozen steps brought her close to the other building, and then the question arose—how was she to enter it?

She had succeeded in breaking the window sufficiently to insert her board, but the aperture was far too small for her body to pass through, even if there had been no danger from the broken glass.

For a moment despair again seized her; then, still retaining her hold upon the wire, she threw out one foot with all the force she dared to use in her precarious position, and detached as much of the glass as possible.

This done, she reached out her left hand and firmly grasped the sash, at the same time releasing her hold upon the wire, which sprang away from her like a thing of life.

Trembling in every limb, now that she was so nearly out of danger, she cautiously crept inside the window and let herself down.

It was very dark and she could see nothing, but her foot touched the floor, and she knew that she was saved!

Overcome with weakness, now that all danger was passed, she sank upon the floor, where she lay helpless and motionless for several minutes.

But all at once a bright light flashed over her.

She started up and looked out across the narrow space which she had so recently traversed, and saw fierce flames leaping all about the room she had just left and out through the window, as if in a frenzy over her escape; and, with a thrill of horror, she realized that the floor had fallen in!

"This building will soon be in flames," she thought; and, staggering to her feet, she resolved to make her way as quickly as possible to a place of safety.

The light from the other house shone all about her and she found that she was in a large empty room.

Making her way to the door she opened it and found herself in a narrow hall, and could faintly distinguish a stairway at its farther end.

Groping her way to this, she descended the stairs to another hall, and following this she went down a second flight and realized that she was on the street floor.

She found the door leading out, but it was of course locked and no key by which she could unfasten it.

"I must go down to the basement and get out through one of the windows," she said; and turning back, she felt her way to the stairs and so down into the regions below.

Just as she reached the lower landing a terrible crash, mingled with startling shouts and cries, fell upon her ears, and for a moment her heart almost ceased its beating.

"The walls of the house have fallen!" Salome mur-

mured, wringing her hands and wondering if any one had perished in the terrible flames which she had so narrowly escaped.

The stream of sparks and fire which arose high in the air, as the walls fell in, enabled her to see that she was in quite a good-sized kitchen. She sprang to one of the windows, unfastened it, and crept out, to find herself in the back yard, with sparks and cinders falling all about her, and with a great empty space on the right of her where her recent home had been.

She sped across the yard, out through an open gate in a narrow court, and thence to a street running parallel with the one where the lodging-houses had been.

It was very cold, a fine sleet was falling, and the street was wet and muddy.

Salome, as we know, was but lightly clothed for such weather, and she soon began to suffer from the storm and a keen wind that was blowing, and wondered what she should do for shelter and a bed in which to spend the remainder of the night.

The street seemed entirely deserted, and she was forlorn and sick at heart. It had occurred to her that perhaps it would have been better if she had perished in the fire; for it would have ended her sorrows. Chancing to glance up at the house she was passing, she saw a woman standing in the doorway, looking anxiously out toward the direction of the fire.

"What is the matter?" she asked, as she caught sight of the girl's pale face; "there is a large fire somewhere near, isn't there?"

"Yes; and I have just escaped from the burning building. Oh! madam, will you let me in to get warm?" pleaded Salome, with chattering teeth and shaking voice.

Could Truman Winthrop have had even a dream of what his delicate wife was suffering that night, he would scarcely have slept as well as he did.

The expression of anxiety on the woman's face was instantly superseded by one of heartfelt pity and sympathy.

"Poor child! poor child! you don't say so!" she cried. "Of course you may come in and welcome. I

have hot water, too, and you shall have something warm to drink, to keep you from taking cold. Come."

She reached out to grasp Salome's hand, as she staggered up the steps, and kindly supported her inside her hospitable doors.

"Thank you; how good—you are," murmured the overtaxed girl; then the reaction came, and she sank helpless and unconscious in the woman's arms.

CHAPTER XXV.

SALOME APPLIES FOR A SITUATION.

WHEN Salome awoke to consciousness, she found herself lying upon a clean bed in a small, neatly furnished room, while a cheerful fire burned in an open, portable grate, and gave an air of home-like comfort to the apartment.

She had on a plain, but spotlessly white night-robe; the sheets and pillow cases upon the bed were like snow, and, though she was conscious of feeling weak, and everything about her was strange, yet she experienced a sense of content and restfulness such as she had not known since she had parted from her husband so many weeks ago.

It was several moments before she could collect her thoughts sufficiently to realize what had happened or how she came to be there; but as she turned upon her pillow to look about her she saw the kind face of the woman who had opened the door to her so hospitably, and remembered all.

"What is it, miss?" she asked, coming to her side, "do you want anything?—do you feel better? You have had such a long sleep; it seemed as if you never would wake up; you must have been thoroughly worn out."

"I am sure I was; but I feel very much rested. How long have I slept?" Salome asked.

"Hours and hours, miss. It was about two o'clock in the morning when I brought you in, and now it is eight o'clock in the evening," was the smiling reply.

"I suppose the fire is out," she said, while a shiver ran over her as she remembered her narrow escape.

"Yes, miss, long ago; but it has been a costly fire, for there were several lives lost. I've been reading about

it in the evening paper, and it has made my heart ache," returned the woman sadly.

"Will you read the account to me?" Salome asked, with a quivering lip.

"Yes, miss, willingly, after you've had something to eat; you must be nearly famished by this time. I'll just bring you a nice bit of toast and a cup of tea; then while you are eating I will read to you."

"Thank you," Salome responded, and tears sprang to her eyes.

It was so pleasant to have some one really interested in her once more, and to feel such kindly care thrown about her.

The woman went quietly out of the room, but returned in about twenty minutes, bringing not only some delicious cream toast and a cup of steaming tea, but a delicately poached egg and some daintily chipped beef.

"How good you are to me!" Salome said gratefully, as she sat up in bed and began to eat hungrily of the tempting meal.

"And why shouldn't I be good to you?" returned her companion, with a pleasant smile. "I couldn't see any young girl in trouble and not try to help her. I've got two little girls myself—bless their dear hearts—and maybe, if they ever lose their mother, they'll need a helping hand somet ime. Besides"—and a tender glow passed over the homely honest face—"I belong to the dear Lord who said, inasmuch as we give a cup of cold water to one of His children we are serving Him."

Salome lifted her dewy eyes to her companion.

"You have given me far more than the cup of cold water." she said, with emotion; "you have taken the stranger in, have clothed and fed and ministered unto me; you have been the good Samaritan in every sense of the word; I never realized before just how much that Bible story means," and two glittering drops rolled over her cheeks.

"Dear heart, you make too much out of a little," replied her companion kindly. "There, eat your supper or it will become cold, and I'll read about the fire to you."

It was not a long account, and she had finished it before Salome was half through eating.

Then she read the names of those who had perished, and the young girl's hand was suddenly arrested in the act of raising her cup to her lips, as she heard her own spoken.

"Oh!" she cried out, setting her cup down, and feeling faint and dizzy.

How wonderful had been her escape, of which, as yet, no one knew!

It seemed as if nothing short of a miracle had enabled her to save herself. Had it not been for the board which the paper-hanger had left in the hall, and the strength and courage which had been given her to make use of it, she would now be lying beneath those fallen walls, a heap of charred bones.

How had she ever dared to cross that narrow bridge to that other house? Oh! that dizzy height! Should she ever forget the terrible sensations she experienced as she stood there, in mid-air, between that brittle board and frail wire?

"I don't wonder it unnerves you, miss, to hear about it," the woman said, as she laid down the paper. "I suppose you knew those poor girls well."

"N-o—only one of them," Salome answered faintly "I had not been a lodger in the house long."

"Perhaps they will think you are dead, too, if you don't put in an appearance pretty soon," said her companion, without a suspicion that she had already read her name among the list of the supposed dead. "What is your name?—if I may ask?"

Salome had been thinking rapidly during the last few minutes. If she was believed to have perished, why not let it go so?

Doubtless Madame Winthrop and Evelyn had already seen this account, and knew that she had been an inmate of that ill-fated house. They would, in all probability, go to inquire regarding the truth of the matter, and would recognize the description that would be given of her. She wished to cut herself off from the family entirely—

she never could resume her relations with them; and what better opportunity could she have than this?

But what name should she henceforth assume?

Not that of Howland—not the one she had previously discarded, for she was more anxious than ever to guard her identity, and yet she could not bear to take one that did not belong to her, for Salome was very conscientious and would not allow herself to speak falsely.

It would not matter much what this woman knew her by—why should she not use the one that Dr. Winthrop had bestowed upon her for a little while?—and before she could give the matter a second thought the name had escaped her lips:

"Winthrop."

"That's a good name, miss; I used to know several Winthrops; but that was long ago, when I lived in Boston," said her companion. "I believe there are some swell people here in New York by that name, too; but I suppose you're no relation to them, or you wouldn't have been staying in that lodging-house."

"I am an orphan," Salome replied sadly, but wondering what the woman would say if she knew the truth about the relationship between those "swell people" and herself.

"Poor child!" was the sympathetic response. "Then you have to look out for yourself. What do you do for a living?"

"I am a nurse," the young girl said.

"A nurse!" exclaimed the other, astonished. "You look more fit to be a patient than a nurse."

"I have not been very well, and I have been resting for a while; but I must try and find some employment," Salome answered. Then, to change the subject, she asked. "And now, won't you please tell me what I may call you?"

"My name's Wood."

"Well, then, Mrs. Wood, please tell me if I am not crowding you by being here? Do you not need this room for your own use?"

"No, indeed, Miss Winthrop. Don't you trouble yourself about that. You're most welcome to it as long as you need it. John and I have the one next to it, and the chil-

dren sleep in the trundle-bed; and I guess I could afford to crowd a little, even if I had to, rather than let a poor homeless girl go into the streets," and Mrs. Wood regarded the occupant of the bed with a very tender glance.

"Thank you," said Salome. "Then I will trespass upon your kindness for a day or two longer, and if you will help me to-morrow about getting something to wear, I shall be very grateful. Of course everything I had was burned."

"I'm sure I'll do the best I can for you," Mrs. Wood responded; then added, "Now, if you feel able to sit up in this big chair for a little while, I'll shake up your bed and make it fresh. It will do you good, and you will be more likely to sleep to-night."

Salome followed her suggestion, and sat chatting for an hour or more with her kind-hearted hostess. She felt greatly refreshed by her long sleep and the appetizing meal of which she had just partaken, and was surprised to find herself so well, and that she had taken no cold from her exposure on the previous night.

She retired again about ten, and slept soundly until morning, when Mrs. Wood served her a nicely broiled steak, hot biscuits, and coffee.

Then the woman told her that if she would look after her children she would go out to do whatever shopping she required.

Salome made out a list of what she needed, and gave her the necessary money; then she set herself to amuse the two little girls until her return.

That afternoon she dressed herself in her modest suit of gray trimmed with black, which Mrs. Wood had purchased for her, and, simple as it was, she looked the lady which she always appeared, but "precious little like a common nurse," as her hostess remarked.

While looking over the evening paper, she came upon the following advertisement:

WANTED—A PERSON TO ACT AS COMPANION and Nurse to a maiden lady who is something of an invalid. One who can read and speak French as well as English, preferred. Apply between the hours of ten and one, at No. — West Thirty-ninth Street.

"I wonder if I could not fill that position," Salome said to herself. "I believe I will apply for it—it could not be as hard as nursing in a hospital, and I am afraid I am not yet quite strong enough for that; I certainly should not be as conspicuous in a private family."

The next morning she told Mrs. Wood what she had decided upon, and then offered to remunerate her for the two days and nights she had been with her. But the generous-hearted woman would not take her money, telling her she was more than welcome to the little that she had done for her.

"You have shown me great kindness, and I can never repay you for that, so you ought to let me give you something for my board and lodging," Salome returned, with starting tears.

"No, no, dear child, I couldn't take your money, but if you feel that I've done you a good turn just pass it along when you have a chance, and that will make it all right," was the reply of this simple-hearted Samaritan.

Salome was not quite satisfied, however, to let the matter rest thus, and before she left she inclosed a generous amount in an envelope, wrote upon it, "For Elsie and Jennie," and fastened it to the pincushion in the room she had occupied.

Then bidding her new friends an affectionate good-by she went away, although Mrs. Wood charged her to come back again if she did not get the place she desired.

Salome went directly to the address given in the advertisement; but as she reached the elegant residence and mounted the massive granite steps, she met several other persons coming out. Instinctively she knew that they had come upon the same errand that had brought her there, while she felt assured that they had not been successful, for they all passed out with downcast faces and averted eyes.

She was half tempted to turn back. But she never liked to give up anything that she had once undertaken, and resolved that she would go in and apply for the situation, whether she accepted it or not.

She rang the bell, and the door was opened by a pleas-

ant-looking woman of perhaps thirty years, who smilingly returned Salome's polite good-morning.

"I have called to make some inquiries regarding this advertisement," Salome courteously remarked, as she presented the slip which she had cut from the paper.

The girl glanced half-pityingly into the fair applicant's face, then said:

"Come in then, miss, and wait in the hall while I go to see if Miss Leonard will receive you. There has been a constant stream of people here all the morning, but no one has suited, and the mistress is nervous and worried."

Salome smiled assent, but she had very little hope that she would be successful as she went in and sat down in one of the great chairs of the hall, while the girl went upstairs to her mistress.

She soon returned, and said:

"You can go up, miss, but you won't find my lady very gracious. Never you mind, though," she added in a lower tone, and with a friendly glance; "you just hold your own, and she'll like you all the better for it."

Salome was somewhat surprised by this advice, but she made no reply as she followed the servant up the lofty flight of stairs, and paused at the door of a large front room.

Salome entered, and found herself in the presence of a woman of about fifty years—a woman having sharp features, and sharper eyes which seemed to look her through and take her measure in an instant. Her face was sallow and wrinkled, and somewhat sullen in expression; her hair was a mixture of gray and black, and her eyes were intensely dark and sharp.

"And still they come!" she snapped, as Salome went forward and saluted her respectfully. "I suppose you expect to jump right into the situation, don't you?"

"I cannot say that I came with that expectation, madam," Salome answered pleasantly, and meeting her keen glance with one of charming frankness; "but I did come with the hope that we should be pleased with each other."

"'Pleased with each other!' Well, now, that sounds

finely, doesn't it?" retorted her companion, with a short laugh that was followed by a peculiar chuckle. "So if I do not suit you, you did not intend to honor me with your service, eh?"

"Well," Salome calmly replied, and not in the least disconcerted by this way of stating the matter, although she was secretly amused, "if you should judge that I would not be congenial to you, and I should feel that I could not be happy in serving you, it would, of course, be best for us not to enter into any agreement; do you not think so?"

"Hum—what's your name?"

"Salome Howland."

She had decided that it would be best to go back to the old name, after all, for if she was to remain in New York she feared the name of Winthrop would attract attention and inquiry.

"Howland—Howland! Where have I heard that name before?" mused Miss Leonard, bending a searching look upon her. Then as Salome made no reply, she added curtly, "You don't look strong enough to be a nurse."

"I know that I am rather slightly built," Salome answered, thinking it best not to say anything about her recent illness, "but I have been trained as a nurse, and I believe I shall be able to render any service you may require, since you do not appear to be very ill."

"Oh, you're a trained nurse, then; where were you trained?"

"In the City Hospital of Boston."

"Have you recommendations?"

"No, madam, but I can easily obtain them if you desire; or you can do so if you think best, by writing to Dr. Hunt, who is the head physician in the institution."

"Well, I'm not ill very often, at the same time I want my companion to be able to take care of me if I should happen to be. When did you leave Boston?"

"Less than three months ago," Salome answered, with lips that were not quite steady, as she remembered all that occurred within that time.

"Have you been in New York all that time?"

"Yes, madam."

"What have you been doing?"

"Nothing but—trying to rest and recruit. I had overtaxed myself a little in Boston."

Oh, how Salome wished she would stop questioning her about the past!

"Have you relatives in this city?"

"No, madam; neither a home nor relatives."

The shrewd eyes watching her noticed the pathetic little quiver about the sweet lips, and softened a trifle.

"Now about your education," Miss Leonard continued, abruptly changing the subject. "Can you read well?"

"Of that you can judge for yourself, if you will allow me to read you something," Salome smilingly returned.

"Well, here is an article on electro-plating; let me see what you can make of it," and the woman pushed a magazine across the table toward her companion.

Salome seated herself opposite her critic, and began to read in clear, sweet tones, articulating distinctly, and rendering the article, which would have interested no one but an electrician, with perfect intelligence.

"That will do," said Miss Leonard, interrupting her. "Now here is a Paris paper—give me some French news; that is, if you know the language."

"I can read French," Salome said quietly, as she took the paper; and instantly she fell to reading like a veritable Frenchwoman.

"Seems to me it was rather a mistake to conceal such talent in a common hospital," laconically observed Miss Leonard. "Can you write a good hand? Here, take this pen and copy the address of this letter."

Salome did as she was bidden, and the woman appeared to be satisfied with the plain and beautiful chirography which she handed back to her.

"Can you sew?" she now asked.

"Will sewing be one of the requirements of the position?" Salome inquired, beginning to feel as if the situation might be more onerous than would be desirable.

"That doesn't matter—I simply asked if you could sew," was the curt rejoinder.

"Yes, madam, I can."

"Then, Miss Howland—do—do you think I would suit you?" the dame questioned sarcastically, but with a comical assumption of meekness, and a humorous twinkle in her shrewd eyes.

The question was so ludicrous, and the woman's look and manner so mirth-provoking, that Salome's face dimpled all over with merry smiles.

She saw that she did not want a servant to wait upon her so much as a companion to amuse her and make the time pass agreeably, and she fancied that rhe excessive brusqueness of manner had been partially assumed to test her; so she acted accordingly.

"Suppose I give you a trial and see?" she retorted, with a roguish gleam in her eyes, a little amused ripple of laughter, that was irresistible, bursting from her lips.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SALOME LEARNS A BIT OF MISS LEONARD'S HISTORY.

"AND what are the wages to be, if you please, marm?" Miss Leonard continued in the same strain, but with a chuckle of appreciation that was not lost upon Salome.

Salome colored slightly, then with grave courtesy she said:

"Really, madam, I had not thought much about the question of remuneration. Let me tell you frankly that I am alone in the world, and I care more for the protection of a home and something to occupy my time and thoughts than for money. I shall be satisfied, I hope, with whatever you may honestly consider my services worth after you have given me a trial."

"Really! Are you some princess in disguise that you are so indifferent?" sneered her companion, while she eyed her sharply, as if she distrusted her motives in making this unusual reply; for heretofore she had found applicants greedy enough in the matter of wages.

"No, madam," Salome quietly responded, though her eyes blazed a trifle at the rudeness of the question. "I am only a poor girl without home or friends."

"Humph! It seems to me it's a queer arrangement," was the short retort; then, after a moment's thought, she added: "But I'm going to take you at your word. You shall come to me, and we'll say nothing about pay until you've been here a month."

"Very well; I accept that proposition," said Salome pleasantly, and with no anxiety about what she should receive, for she still had money in her purse—more than enough for a month's needs.

She felt attracted toward this woman, in spite of her eccentricities, and she believed that, with the exercise

of a little tact, she would have no difficulty in living amicably with her, and might, perhaps, even help to smooth off some of her rough corners.

"All right; but I shall want you immediately," said Miss Leonard imperiously.

"I am at liberty, and can come to you whenever you wish," Salome answered.

"This afternoon, then, at four o'clock," was the brief command of her new employer.

She rang a bell as she spoke, and the servant who had ushered Salome in immediately made her appearance.

"Harriet, show Miss Howland out; then come back and get my writing-desk for me," said her mistress.

She waved her hand authoritatively, and Salome felt herself dismissed without further ceremony.

She bowed politely, as she turned to leave the room, but though her salute was not returned, she caught sight of the quizzical smile that wreathed the strange woman's lips as she went out.

"Well, did you suit her?" asked the girl, as they were on their way downstairs.

Salome laughed out softly.

"I am afraid that would be a hard question to answer," she said. "However, I am coming to stay with her on trial for a month."

"If she keeps you, and you can stand it, for a month, you'll stay longer," returned Harriet. Then she added kindly: "Let me give you a bit of advice, young woman. You see, I like your looks, and I think it might be pleasant to have you in the house. Just make up your mind that Miss Leonard is the crankiest old woman you ever saw, and lay in an abundant stock of patience for your month of trial—and it will be trial, you may depend. If you can endure her whims for that length of time, she'll gradually come around all right, you'll learn how to manage her, and you'll have no great trouble afterward."

"Thank you; I will remember what you tell me," Salome said gratefully. "Now, please, tell me what I shall call you?"

"Harriet's my name—Harriet Winter."

"And mine is Salome Howland. I hope we shall be good friends, Harriet," the young girl said, smiling, and holding out her hand to her fellow-servant, and from that moment Miss Leonard's maid was her sworn ally.

Salome had her dinner, after which she made some needful purchases, which she put into a small trunk, and ordered the whole sent by express to Miss Leonard's residence.

Then, having a couple of hours at her disposal, she slipped into a gallery to look at some new pictures which had been advertised as on exhibition.

They were in an upper room; finding a comfortable seat, she sat down to examine them at her leisure.

She had been there alone for, perhaps, half an hour, when two ladies entered and sat down behind her.

They conversed for a few moments; then one of them suddenly exclaimed:

"Mrs. Rogers, do look at that portrait in the corner —whom does it resemble? Do you see a likeness to any one whom you know?"

"Well, I should say it looks as much like Miss Polly Leonard as any one," was the reply.

"Exactly. There is the same parchment-colored face; the same shrewd, malicious eyes and grim mouth; while the prim, starched figure is almost identical. By the way, isn't she the queerest specimen of humanity that you have ever met?"

"She is peculiar, Mrs. Allison; but, poor woman! I can hardly wonder at it, for she has had trouble enough during her life to make her so," was the pitiful reply of Mrs. Rogers.

It was very strange, Salome thought, that the very woman with whom she was going to live should be thus discussed in her presence.

At first she thought she would go away, for she was sensitive about listening to a conversation like this.

Then she reasoned that the ladies must have seen her, and must know that she could hear all that was said, and if they did not think it worth their while to be cautious in their remarks it was no affair of hers, while

she might possibly learn something about her patron that would aid in her future service if she remained; so she sat still and waited with increasing interest for further developments.

"I suppose she has," the lady who had been called Mrs. Allison replied; "at least, I have heard that she was disappointed in love when she was young, and it completely changed her disposition. Do you know her history?"

"Yes, and a very sad one it is, too," Mrs. Rogers returned. "She was engaged to a fine young fellow and they were about to be married. She was living in Washington at that time; the day was set for the wedding, and she had everything ready, even to her veil and gloves. Her lover was an Eastern man—a native of Massachusetts—but he was in Washington for several weeks preceding the date set for their marriage. They had a bitter quarrel over something one evening at some private theatricals, and the match was broken off. Of course it broke the girl's heart, and it came out later that some people, who had a petty spite against her, for some unknown reason, had influenced her betrothed against her, misrepresenting her character and disposition with the sole purpose of breaking off the marriage. It changed Miss Leonard from a bright, lovely, and fascinating girl into a wretched, revengeful woman—a despiser of all men—a hater of her own sex. Soon after she lost her father and mother, then a little later her only sister, and that left her without a relative in the world, though with a large fortune at her disposal, and she might have made a brilliant marriage. But her troubles, instead of chastening her, only served to increase the bitterness; she seemed to imagine every one her enemy, and so made herself everybody's enemy. She left Washington soon after the death of her sister, and came to New York, where she secluded herself from all society. She bought and furnished that beautiful house on Thirty-ninth Street, where she has lived alone with her servants ever since. I have heard that she leads them a terrible life, and can keep no one with her very long, but her maid, Harriet, who seems to know just how to man-

age her, and has been with her for ten years. She is so exceedingly antagonistic she has very few friends, and yet I have heard that there is kindness in her heart, if any one can but once get down to it. I have heard that she is very generous, and has secretly done a great deal of good among the poor."

"How much do you imagine she is worth?" Mrs. Allison inquired.

"I have no idea—a great deal, I have been told; while, living as she does, she cannot of course spend her income, so it must be accumulating."

"What will become of it when she gets through with it?"

"That is another subject which excites considerable comment," replied Mrs. Rogers. "She is so peculiar, she will probably make some exceedingly eccentric disposal of it; perhaps she will found an institution for the advancement of some strange whim."

"Well, she is truly a pitiable object, for of course, with her peculiarities, there are not many, if any, who love her, and life, without love, is not worth living," sighed Mrs. Allison. Then she added, "You called her Miss Polly Leonard, is that really her name?"

"No; she is Miss Pauline Leonard, but I suspect that she has been so queer that the Pauline has degenerated into Polly through the spite of her enemies. But," looking at her watch, "I have an appointment with my dressmaker, and I must go at once."

The two ladies rose and passed out, but Salome still sat there and wiped away the tears which had been quietly flowing down her cheeks during the above recital. Her heart was full of sympathy and tenderness for the poor woman whose life had been warped and blighted by the spite of evil-disposed persons.

"I am glad that I have heard her history," she murmured, "for I know it will help me to have patience with her, and pity for her moods. I am going to try to make her life a little brighter, poor, poor woman! Who can tell what possibilities were destroyed when those revengeful people sought to ruin her happiness—she might have been a loving wife, a noble mother, and the

world a great deal better for her influence. Those women will have a great deal to answer for by and by; but I believe my coming here this afternoon was providential."

Precisely at four o'clock, Salome rang the bell at the door of her new home, and was soon admitted by the good-natured Harriet.

"You're on time, Miss Howland, and that will please Miss Leonard—though you'll never know it from her," she remarked. "I am to show you to your room—your trunk is already there—and then you're to have dinner with the mistress."

Salome followed Harriet up two flights of stairs to a pleasant room directly over the one where she had met Miss Leonard in the morning. It was comfortably furnished, and had a home-like air that was very restful and satisfying to her.

She removed her wraps, rearranged her hair, then tied a pretty white apron about her waist, and was ready to go down to the second story, where she found Harriet just going to her mistress, and at a signal from her followed her into the room.

Miss Leonard did not pay the slightest heed to her, until she had given her orders to Harriet, and dismissed her; then, in an extremely matter-of-fact manner, as if the girl had already been there a month, she remarked:

"The leaves of this new magazine are waiting to be cut, Miss Howland, and by the time you have finished, dinner will be served. Afterward I shall want you to make out a list for some shopping that must be done to-morrow."

Salome sat down in a low rocker near Miss Leonard, and began to cut the leaves of the book with an exquisite paper-cutter of solid silver, and thus entered upon her duties as companion to the most peculiar character she had ever met.

When dinner was announced, she followed to the dining-room, and took the seat opposite her. Harriet was present to wait. Everything about the table was rich and elegant, and arranged in the most perfect manner, while the numerous courses plainly indicated that Miss

Leonard was not indifferent to luxuries, even if she did live the life of a recluse.

The meal was somewhat tedious, for Miss Leonard did not seem inclined to be social, and Salome did not feel at liberty to introduce any topic for conversation; but it was over at last, and they went to the library, where Salome was required to make out the list for shopping.

Then she was sent for the magazine, which she had made ready before dinner, and for nearly two hours she read aloud, beginning with the first article, and reading everything in course. Evidently Miss Leonard intended to get her money's worth out of her periodicals, for she would allow nothing to be skipped, and she was a tireless listener, taking in everything, as the quick glancing of her intelligent eyes and the varying expression of her face plainly betrayed.

"Do you play backgammon?" she abruptly asked, as Salome finished a long article on ancient architecture.

"Yes," she answered, she knew both the Russian and the common games.

"Then wheel that little table over here, and we'll play for a while before we go to bed," Miss Leonard commanded, and for another hour not much was heard but the rattle of dice and the moving of men.

At half-past nine, Miss Leonard pushed back her chair and asked Salome to ring the bell for Harriet.

"Now you can go to bed if you want to," she said, "but we have breakfast promptly at eight o'clock."

Salome experienced a feeling of relief, on learning that her duties would not begin until that time, and told herself that, by rising early, she would have at least two hours for work or study, as she chose.

She bade Miss Leonard a pleasant good-night, remarking that she hoped she would rest well.

"Humph! what is it to you whether I rest well or not?" bluntly demanded her patron, while she searched her face with her keen black eyes.

Salome looked up surprised.

"Why," she answered sweetly, "in my own home I was taught to take leave of my parents when I retired, and to say something pleasant and courteous before leaving

them; and truly, Miss Leonard, I do hope that you may have a comfortable night. Is there anything that I can do for you before I go?"

"No, child, no. Good-night," Miss Leonard returned, in a mollified tone, while a slight flush for a moment intensified the sallowness of her face; then, as Harriet came, Salome went away to her own room

"What do you think of her, Harriet?" Miss Leonard manded of her maid, when, a few moments later, she was herself preparing to retire.

"She seems like a nice kind of person, pleasant-spoken and good-natured," the girl responded.

"Humph! she isn't what she seems, by a good deal," curtly observed her mistress.

"Marm?" and Harriet looked surprised.

"She never was brought up to work for her living; she was reared a lady," explained Miss Leonard.

"So I thought, marm," quietly observed the maid, but with an enlightened smile.

"Oh, you did, did you? Pray what caused you to arrive at such an astute conclusion?" sarcastically demanded her mistress.

"Well, marm, as you know, I've served gentlefolks ever since I was a girl, and I can tell a lady after I've seen her eat one meal, let alone her other manners."

"Really!"

"Yes'm," asserted Harriet, in nowise daunted by her mistress' mocking tone; "they'll always show at table whether they've been served and taught genteel manners, and Miss Howland never once made a mistake at dinner."

"Don't you suppose I know it as well as you?" snapped the elder woman. "There, turn out the gas and then go; but you may tell cook to make coffee in the morning—it isn't likely the girl is fond of that weak cocoa that I have to drink."

Harriet quietly obeyed her orders, and then softly withdrew from the room, smiling wisely to herself at this evidence of Miss Leonard's appreciation of her new companion, for never before had she been known to give an order independent of her own interests.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SALOME HAS A STARTLING EXPERIENCE.

SALOME was not destined to have an easy time in her new position.

If Miss Leonard recognized the fact that she had been reared a lady, she did not betray it in her treatment of her, and before the first week of her month had expired, the tired girl began to wonder if she could have patience to pursue the same routine, always under the same disagreeable circumstances.

She felt that she never could have submitted to the whims and caprices, to the despotism and variable disposition of this strange woman, if she had not overheard that conversation between Mrs. Rogers and Mrs. Allison in the art-room.

That had begotten a tender pity and sympathy in her own sore and sorrowful heart for the lonely and unloved creature, and she longed to do her good, to be of some comfort to her. Only Miss Leonard intrenched herself behind such an antagonistic and forbidding manner, that it did not seem possible to reach her better nature, if indeed she had any.

"Oh, if I could only win her confidence—win her to have a little more faith in humanity generally—to realize that life is not simply a battle-ground, where every man's hand is against her, I should be well repaid for almost any effort or amount of endurance," she sighed one evening, after an unusually hard and trying day.

But it was apparently such a hopeless task—Miss Leonard was so antagonistic, so arbitrary and inconsiderate, she was afraid that she could not stay with her.

But something occurred which made a radical change

in the relations of this human porcupine and her gentle companion.

One morning Miss Leonard sent Salome down to the drawing-room to get a book of engravings that was kept there. Salome had never been in the room before, and her eyes gleamed with delight as they fell upon a fine piano, which stood in one corner, while her fingers tingled to test its tones.

She found the book she had been sent for, and returned to Miss Leonard's boudoir, feeling that she could not be utterly wretched even in such an uncongenial atmosphere, if she could but obtain permission to make use of the instrument below.

"What's the matter?" Miss Leonard demanded, regarding her suspiciously, as she caught sight of her bright face.

"Matter?" Salome questioned, not realizing that she had betrayed emotion of any kind.

"Yes, you look wonderfully elated over something. What happened while you were downstairs?"

"Nothing," Salome answered; "only I was pleased to find that you have a fine piano in the house."

"Humph! Can you play the piano?"

"Yes; I am really fond of music."

"Really! You're quite a talented young woman—for a nurse," was the mocking retort.

Nothing more was said upon the subject at that time, but, after dinner, Miss Leonard told Harriet to light the chandelier in the drawing-room and open the piano; then rising from the table she led the way thither.

"There," she remarked to her companion, as she pointed toward the "concert grand;" "now we'll see what you can do."

Salome colored at her tone, yet she was amused, for it was evident that Miss Leonard did not expect great things of her.

"I have no music with me, but perhaps I can remember a few simple pieces," she remarked, as she seated herself upon the stool and struck a few chords.

Then she suddenly forgot all about herself and her sur-

roundings. Her memory served her well; music came to her as she played, and she literally lost herself in the exquisite melodies which she awoke in that room of gloomy magnificence.

At length, however, it occurred to her that her selections might not be pleasing to her listener, and turning about, her hands dropped from the key-board, as she asked:

"Are you getting tired of it, Miss Leonard?"

A long-drawn sigh fell upon her ear, and she saw that she looked pale and very sad.

"No—no; but can you not sing something?" she asked, in a more kindly tone than Salome had ever heard her use.

"Oh, yes, if you prefer vocal music," she answered obligingly.

She sang a couple of simple ballads, and then, all at once, broke forth into that air from the opera of "The Bohemian Girl:"

"When other lips and other hearts
Their tale of love shall tell,
In language whose excess imparts
The power they feel so well,
There may, perhaps, in such a scene
Some recollection be
Of days that have as happy been,
And you'll remember me.

"When coldness or deceit shall slight
The beauty now they prize,
And deem it but a faded light
That beams within your eyes;
When hollow hearts shall wear a mask
'Twill break your own to see,
In such a moment I but ask
That you'll remember me."

Salome had reached this last line, when a hollow groan burst upon her ear, and a shaking voice, shrill with agony, cried out:

"Stop! stop! for mercy's sake, stop!"

Salome sprang from the stool, and turned affrighted toward her companion, to find her sitting with her face

buried in her hands and her form shaking with a nervous tremor.

"O Miss Leonard! what have I done?" she cried. "Have I wounded you by singing a song that has aroused painful memories? Forgive me—pray forgive me! I would not have done it for the world, if I had known."

She comprehended the situation at once.

She knew that that song must be linked in some way with the great sorrow that had fallen upon her in her early life; that it had recalled and aroused all her agony over those blighted hopes, of which she had heard.

"Children like you do not know what trouble is," Miss Leonard said sharply, for she was suffering keenly, and she forgot how young she had been when her great sorrow had fallen upon her. "Ah," she went on bitterly, "when you have made an idol of some one and found that idol worthless clay; when you have built the hopes of a life-time upon the truth and constancy of one human being, and had them ruthlessly betrayed and blighted at the very moment they were upon the point of being realized; when death has left you friendless; when spite and malice have turned your nature to gall—then you may talk of being unhappy."

"I have—O Miss Leonard, I have known something of such bitter experiences, and if my sorrow is so much fresher and more recent than yours do you not think I feel it as keenly?" sobbed Salome.

"No; for mine has been eating and corroding my heart for more than thirty years, until it has consumed all the kindness and love in my nature, and made me the virago that I am. There! you can imagine that it has cost me something to own that to you; for I am a proud woman, and I never talk of my troubles, much less of my sins. Of course you couldn't know what that song meant to me. Ah!" with a bitter groan—"shall I ever forget the last time I heard it sung? But," rising and trying to steady her shaking tones, "we will not talk any more about it."

Then, as if moved by some uncontrollable impulse, she bent forward and kissed Salome upon the cheek.

"There, child," she said, flushing; "I'm making a perfect fool of myself, I suppose, and I've never kissed anybody since my sister died. But"—drawing herself up and speaking with something of her usual arbitrariness "we will never speak of this again. Good-night, child."

She turned abruptly and left the room, but Salome could see that she was terribly shaken, for she could not walk steadily.

She soon followed her and stole softly up to her room, where she retired to rest, though she brooded long over the unhappiness of the woman whose trouble had been so much like her own.

"Why is life so sad?" she asked herself. "Why are so many lives blighted and ruined? Why, if humanity was born to develop into a pure and sinless spirit, are there so many baneful influences to warp the soul and destroy all the sweetness and nobility of the nature?"

But these were mysteries which could only be solved in the light of the future, when all secrets should be revealed; and Salome, who was learning to carry all her troubles to the good Father, sent up a little prayer for faith, and strength, and courage, and then fell into a profound and dreamless sleep.

She was awakened very early in the morning, long before daylight, by a hand upon her shoulder, and found Harriet standing by her bedside, with a lighted candle, her face pale and anxious.

"Miss Howland, will you get up, please?" she said. "Miss Leonard has been taken very ill; she says you have been trained as a nurse, and perhaps you will know what to do for her."

"Yes, indeed, Harriet. Go directly back to her, and I will come as soon as I can dress," Salome answered, as she sprang out of bed and began to put on her clothes.

Two minutes later she was in Miss Leonard's room, and found her in a very nervous state, tossing to and fro, complaining of a dreadful pain in her head, while her face was strangely flushed, and the veins about her temples and neck were much swollen.

Salome saw at once that the woman had not slept at

all, that she had doubtless suffered, and was still suffering from the excitement of the previous evening, and she feared apoplexy, unless she could be immediately relieved.

"Harriet, you must get a hot foot-bath ready directly," she said, as she raised Miss Leonard to a half-recumbent position, and placed three or four pillows beneath her head and shoulders. She loosened her night-robe at the neck, and applied cloths dipped in cold water to her head.

Harriet was soon ready with the foot-bath, and it was not long before the two women began to perceive a change for the better in their patient.

Her eyes began to grow more natural in expression, the crimson flush gradually faded from her face, her nervousness abated, and her pulse became more regular.

When day dawned, Salome knew that all immediate danger was past, but there were other symptoms which she considered critical, and she told Harriet that she thought her physician ought to be summoned.

"No, don't you dare send for a doctor. I won't have any men about me," snapped Miss Leonard, who had overheard the conference.

"But, Miss Leonard," Salome said, going to her bedside, and speaking persuasively, "I know that you need advice—you need instant and radical treatment."

"I can't help it—I won't have any doctor about my premises," she stubbornly reiterated.

"Well, if you object to the sex, there are women who are regular physicians; let me send for one of them," Salome urged.

"I won't," was the resolute answer. "I'm not going to be experimented on. I don't believe in doctors any way, and the less of their stuff one takes the better. You claim that you are a trained nurse—you must know something about sickness; treat me yourself."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MISS LEONARD'S ILLNESS.

SALOME saw that she was becoming greatly excited, and concluded not to argue the point any further just then.

"I am sure," she said, after thinking a moment, "I will do the best I can for you, Miss Leonard; "but you surely need medicine."

"Well, perhaps I do, and I'll take anything you think I ought to have; but I won't have a doctor—so that is settled."

Salome was deeply troubled. She did not dare to assume the responsibility of administering remedies without the advice of an intelligent physician, and yet it would not do to persist in calling one, for the woman would certainly work herself into a dangerous state if antagonized.

She went into Miss Leonard's dressing-room and beckoned Harriet to come to her.

The girl followed, after a few moments, under pretence of renewing the wet cloth upon her mistress's head.

"What shall we do, Harriet?" Salome questioned anxiously. "Miss Leonard is certainly very ill, and she must have medical attendance."

"Well, I don't know, miss; she's had her say, and an eight-ox team wouldn't move her now," said the maid, in a positive tone.

"How would it do, I wonder, if I should go to some skilful physician, tell him exactly how the matter stands, and describe her symptoms. I could do that every day, and twice a day, if necessary, and perhaps he could then treat her through me," Salome said musingly.

"Don't you think you could do as well by yourself?" inquired the girl. "She'd be hopping mad if she should ever find it out."

"I do not dare to trust my own judgment, unaided; and, Harriet, I am afraid she is going to be very ill."

"Oh, dear, I hope not!" sighed Harriet. "Perhaps she will be better if we wait a day or two."

"I do not dare to wait, Harriet; I am very much troubled by her symptoms," Salome returned gravely.

"Then I guess you'd better work your plan—though how the bill will be paid is more than I can tell. No doctor would ever see the color of her money, if we should go contrary to her will," said the maid gloomily.

"Well, I would rather work until I could earn the money myself than run any risk or assume the responsibility," Salome returned with decision. "Do you know of a skilful doctor who lives near here?"

"Yes, there are the Doctors Minot—the old and the young man—just around the corner; they're accounted first-class, but they charge awful!"

"I cannot help that. I shall put the case in their hands, tell them just how we are situated, and trust the result with Providence," and Salome's brow cleared somewhat as she arrived at the conclusion.

"Good luck go with you, Miss Howland; I'm sure you have a kind heart to be so interested for such a cross old woman."

Harriet would have resented it if any one else had called her mistress that; but just now she was very much troubled by her perverseness in refusing to see a doctor.

"Don't speak so, Harriet," returned her companion gently. "She is one of the good Father's children, the same as you or I, and perhaps she would have been very different if she had had a happier life. Now," she added, "I am going to get my breakfast, after that to Dr. Minot's. If Miss Leonard asks for me, tell her I have gone to the drug store for remedies—for I shall go there before I return."

She ran up to her room and prepared for the street, then went to break her fast—for she was faint and hungry,

from her three hours of labor and anxiety in the sick-room—and after she had eaten went directly out.

She found the physician's office readily enough, and was kindly received by young Dr. Minot, who, by the way, was not so very young, being upward of forty, but was so styled because his father was still practising.

Salome stated her case plainly, and the physician seemed to appreciate the situation. He knew something of Miss Leonard, he said, and was not at all surprised at her refusal to see a doctor. He saw at once that Salome was intelligent, and had made the most of her training in the hospital, and he thought there would be no difficulty in treating the case through her if she reported regularly and faithfully.

He said, frankly, that he regarded Miss Leonard's symptoms alarming, and thought that it would be best for her to report twice a day for the present; then he prescribed certain remedies, to be given during the next twelve hours, after which he politely accompanied her to the door, and bade her a courteous good-morning.

She procured what she needed from the nearest pharmacy, and then hastened home, greatly relieved to have her burden shared by a skilful physician. But although she eagerly availed herself of his advice, and faithfully followed it, there were weary days and weeks before her, for Miss Leonard had a long and tedious illness.

At first she seemed to be doing better than had been anticipated, and both doctor and nurse were congratulating themselves that she would soon be out of danger, when, one morning, the wilful woman insisted upon getting up, took cold, and then for three weeks lay very near death's door, and unconscious most of the time of all that was going on around her.

Then, upon her own responsibility, Salome admitted Dr. Minot to his patient, and he came twice every day, until she began to come to herself, when he treated her through Salome, as before.

Then there were four weeks more of slow and tedious convalescence, during which the invalid tried the souls of her attendants to their utmost endurance.

Salome, however, was very pitiful and tender, for during her delirium she had betrayed much which she had never meant any human being to know, and the girl had shed many tears over the sorrows and trials that had made her the crabbed and peculiar creature that she was. She resolved that nothing should make her get out of patience with her—that she would bear with her weakness and her crochets, and she even really began to feel an affection, such as a mother often experiences toward a feeble and fractious child.

She never allowed her to see a cloud upon her brow; she always greeted her with a smile, responded to her complaints with cheerful, hopeful words, and was ever gentle and considerate, even when she was almost worn out with her ceaseless watching and anxiety.

She often wondered that her own strength did not give out; but she was perfectly well, although very weary, and was conscious that she was steadily outgrowing the troubles that had threatened her before leaving Boston. She knew that the tide of health had turned strongly in her favor during those few weeks when she had been so happy in her husband's home and love, and the good work was still going on.

One morning Miss Leonard seemed to be more than usually unmanageable, and was so rude and cross with Salome that she was obliged to make some excuse to leave the room, in order to conceal the tears she could no longer restrain.

Then Harriet, who had grown to love her very dearly during these weeks of mutual watching and anxiety, turned upon her mistress and gave vent to her indignation.

"I'm sure I don't know what you're thinking of, marm, to treat that angel so," she cried hotly.

"Angel?" sneered the angry woman; "there are no angels in the world. "I've lived in it for more than fifty years, and I never met one yet."

"Well, you've got one in this very house," retorted Harriet: "though I suppose you wouldn't acknowledge it if the Virgin Mary herself should come down to serve

you. But I'll tell you one thing, if I lose my place for it, you'd have been under the sod long before this, if it hadn't been for Miss Howland."

"Pooh! Mind your own business, Harriet; I haven't been as sick as all that," scornfully returned Miss Leonard, who had never realized her danger.

"But you have, marm," solemnly replied the girl; "seven days and seven nights we hung over you, and thought every one would be your last. The doctor said you couldn't li——"

"Doctor?" screamed Miss Leonard wrathfully. "What doctor?"

Poor Harriet looked crest-fallen enough at this unlucky slip of the tongue; but the secret was out now, and she thought she might as well make a clean breast of everything, so she confessed the whole story to her mistress.

Miss Leonard's brow was black with anger as she listened; she had been hoodwinked and outwitted.

While she had been lying unconscious and helpless in their care these two women had admitted, in direct opposition to her commands, a despised physician, and given her into his care to be experimented upon. True, the experiment had proved successful, but that she did not take into consideration at that moment.

"You shall pay for this, Harriet, when I get able to give you your just deserts," she said fiercely, when the story was told.

"I can't help it, marm," the woman returned, with an independent toss of her head, and feeling relieved now that the secret was out; "your life was worth too much to be sacrificed to a mere whim. Perhaps you would rather we had let you die; come, now—would you?"

"But you disobeyed my strict orders," began her mistress evasively.

"Yes, marm, and it was lucky for you we did," Harriet said, gaining confidence in her defence; "but leaving yourself out of the question, can't you have a little feeling for that poor young thing? What if she had taken the responsibility of treating you, as you ordered her, and

you had died? 'Twouldn't be very comfortable for her to think of all her life."

"Humph! Who's to pay the bills, I'd like to know," snapped Miss Leonard, steering clear of all answers, as before.

"Miss Howland spoke of that, and said she would work to pay them herself, rather than run the risk of letting you die. I tell you, marm, there ain't many people like her in the world. Can't you see for yourself, how much flesh that patient girl has worn off for you? Look at her hollow cheeks, her sunken eyes, and thin hands; she hadn't much to lose when she came here, goodness knows, but she has less now, and I don't know as she had any special reason to work herself to death for you, either."

Miss Leonard shot a startled look at her maid at this. She had been so full of her own aches and pains, that she had given no thought to any one else; but now it occurred to her that Salome did look sadly worn—her face was hollow and thin.

A shiver of self-repulsion ran over her, and a flush, hot and burning, mounted to her brow. She knew there had been many days that had been an utter blank to her —when, probably, she had been near death, as Harriet had said. What if she had died!

These thoughts led to others, and much of her past life flitted before her, quickening her conscience and arousing remorse, and in her weakened state she fell to weeping nervously. Salome returned at this point and found her in an almost hysterical condition.

This of course would not do, and without even inquiring the cause of her tears, she set about diverting her mind into a more pleasant channel.

But from that day both Salome and Harriet began to observe a change in her.

It was very slight at first and marked only by little things—the sudden breaking off in the middle of a harsh sentence, supplementing her orders now and then with the courteous words "if you please," insisting that both the nurse and maid should alternate in having a little

rest every afternoon, instead of demanding increasing attendance all day long.

Toward the latter, too, she was less crabbed and arbitrary, and the woman began to notice and comment upon it to Salome.

"I hope she won't get too good," she dryly remarked one day, when her mistress had been more kind than usual. "I ain't used to it, you know; I rather think, on the whole, it gives a spice to life, and keeps my spirits up, to have a little tiff with her now and then."

Salome had a hearty laugh over this characteristic remark, but thought she enjoyed Miss Leonard far more without the "tiffs."

She surprised them both one day by sending a message to Dr. Minot, requesting him to call.

She had never exchanged a word with Salome regarding his attendance upon her, although the young nurse had expected, after Harriet's revelation, to be called to account for it; but she felt she had done right, and so had no anxiety over the matter.

Dr. Minot came, as desired, and Miss Leonard received him graciously, which, considering her hatred of the sex, greatly surprised her attendants.

She had a long conference with him, during which the physician expressed his unbounded admiration for the manner in which Salome had attended her during her protracted illness. He told her frankly that she must have died, but for the excellent nursing she had received, although he did not undervalue his own services.

Miss Leonard did not express herself regarding Salome's merits, but she curtly informed her visitor that she "never had any faith in doctors, though she supposed there were times when they were useful," and concluded by asking the amount of his bill.

Dr. Minot, with a shrewd twinkle in his eyes, named a very moderate sum.

Miss Leonard, without relaxing a muscle of her grim face, immediately filled out a check for double the amount and passed it to him.

Dr. Minot looked at it and knit his brows. He had

expected that she would object to even the small sum he had named.

"I think you have made a mistake, madam," he remarked; "the amount I stated was exactly half of what you have written here."

"Excuse me, sir, if I have burdened you," the woman replied, with exaggerated politeness, "but charity should be extended to those who need it. If I have overpaid you, pray use the surplus for such objects."

Dr. Minot pocketed the check without further comment, but he shook hands cordially with his patient as he took his leave, and went out with a peculiar smile on his honest face.

"She's like a chestnut in some respects, I imagine," he muttered; "you'll generally find a good kernel if you can get inside the burr, but it takes either frost or hard knocks to accomplish that."

The following morning Miss Leonard asked Salome if she would be willing to accompany her upon an extended trip.

Salome expressed a cheerful willingness to do so. Indeed she had begun to fear that she had made a mistake in remaining in New York, for she was liable to meet Dr. Winthrop when he should return, and she felt that she should never have strength for such an encounter.

"Where do you propose to go?" she asked of Miss Leonard.

"Well, that doctor of yours"—this with a little significant emphasis—"thought I'd better try a sea-voyage if I had the courage for it, and I've about made up my mind that I will take a run over to England and France if you and Harriet will go with me. It's many years since I visited Europe."

Harriet, who was really attached to her mistress, in spite of her peculiarities, was ready to go anywhere she desired, and the date of their departure was fixed for the first of June.

During the few weeks previous to their start Miss Leonard continued to improve physically and spiritually. It really seemed as if her illness had changed her nature,

for she was kinder and more considerate toward every one, while she exhibited a constantly increasing fondness for Salome.

They rode together every morning when the weather was fine; during the evening they entertained themselves with reading, music, and backgammon, and every day grew more fond of each other.

One night, after they had spent an unusually pleasant evening, Salome approached Miss Leonard as she was about to retire, and said, while a soft flush arose to her cheeks.

"Dear Miss Leonard, while you were ill I never went away to rest without kissing you good-night, for some times I was afraid I should not find you when I came back. May I keep up the custom now that you are well?"

She held up her lips as she ceased speaking, and they were so tremulously sweet and tempting that the woman involuntarily stooped and gave her the caress she craved.

"Heaven bless you, child!" she said heartily. "I begin to believe there is a soft spot in my heart after all, and you have been the first one to find it."

And Salome was sure there was a suspicious moisture in her eyes as she turned away from her.

She never left her after that without bidding her the same affectionate good-night. The lonely girl craved love; it was natural to her to give expression to the tenderness of her own heart; and so, little by little, she twined herself about the affections of this strange woman.

Two days before Miss Leonard was to sail she sent for her lawyer, and was closeted with him during the whole forenoon; and when Harriet was summoned after his departure, she found her mistress pale and grave, but with a softer light in her keen eyes than she had ever seen in them before.

"Harriet," she said abruptly, "I've made my will to-day, and, if anything happens to me while we are away, the document will be found in the hands of Mr. Travis. If you live longer than I do, you'll find, my good girl, that I haven't forgotten you."

"Thank you, marm," was all that the astonished Harriet could say. She had never dreamed of such a thing as being remembered in her mistress's will, or that she would ever show any especial appreciation of her services. She gave her fair wages, and they were always promptly paid —more than this she had never expected.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SALOME LOSES HER VALUED FRIEND.

JUNE first found Miss Leonard with her companion and maid upon the briny deep, looking forward with evident pleasure to an extended trip abroad.

Fortunately not one of the trio was ill, and the voyage was one of unalloyed enjoyment, for they all loved the sea.

To Salome's great delight Miss Leonard did not make any of her idiosyncrasies disagreeably prominent during the voyage; indeed, she appeared to try to subdue her natural antagonism, and to adapt herself to others, so that she was regarded by the passengers only as a somewhat quaint and original person, whom they rather enjoyed.

Salome was of course a general favorite; so gentle and loving a disposition could not fail to win all hearts, while she was kind and helpful, wherever she could be so, to those who suffered from sea-sickness.

They landed at Liverpool and proceeded directly to London, where they remained for a couple of weeks, after which they went to Scotland, to a quiet, homelike hotel near Lake Katrine, where they spent two delightful months enjoying the beauties surrounding them, and making many excursions to points of interest.

Miss Leonard was a good traveller; she was well read in history, and desirous of visiting every place of note, while she had a faculty of fixing dates and places in her mind that was truly surprising as well as convenient. Salome was very hopeful, too, for she had secured much reading matter relating to the routes they travelled, and entertained her companions, during their evenings, by reading up in advance, and thus they were always well

posted regarding the history of the different places they visited.

In September they went to Germany, following the Rhine slowly down to Lake Constance, where they spent the last week in October; thence through the Austrian Tyrol, and on to Italy, arriving in Rome about the first of January.

Everything went well with them—there had been nothing of any moment to mar their pleasure, and Miss Leonard complimented Salome very highly for the tact which she exercised in travelling.

"I should imagine that you had been used to it all your life," she remarked one day, when Salome had smoothed over some difficulty regarding their baggage, which they encountered in crossing the Austrian frontier. "You are a very comfortable traveller, and I should surely think you had been abroad before, Salome;" she had taken to calling her by her Christian name of late.

Salome smiled at the compliment, but made no reply to the supposition that she had previously been in Europe, though she flushed slightly, and Miss Leonard's suspicions were strengthened.

Then she could speak French and German with much fluency, and seemed to know all about the different kinds of money they were obliged to handle.

But it was not until they reached Rome that Miss Leonard's suspicions were confirmed. Here Salome's enthusiasm overflowed, and she discoursed about the Forum, the Coliseum, the Palace of the Cæsars and the Catacombs in a way which plainly betrayed that she had visited them before.

"When were you in Rome before, Salome?" Miss Leonard dryly asked one evening, breaking in upon an eloquent description of certain points in St. Peter's and the Vatican.

"I did not say that I had ever been here before," Salome stammered, flushing hotly.

"True, but you talk like an old sight-seer."

"You forget that we read a great deal about these places last evening," the young girl answered.

"No, I do not; but if my memory serves me right, there was nothing in these books about the comparative merits of the Pompeian baths and those of Caracalla, and you have given me several points upon the subject. "Salome, you have been abroad before?"

"Yes," the young girl confessed, tears starting to her eyes over memories thus aroused.

"When?"

"Not so very long ago—less than two years."

"You must have been tenderly reared—your parents must have been wealthy?"

"Yes."

"And you have lost all your friends—all your money?"

"All—everything!" she returned sadly, but just how much those two words comprehended, she alone knew.

"And a lover too, if I am not mistaken," Miss Leonard mused, her glance resting tenderly upon the pained, downcast face of her gentle companion. "Poor child! and yet trouble has not hardened or embittered her as it did me. Well, the Bible says 'a little child shall lead them,' and I believe she is leading me into a state I never should have reached if some pitiful fate had not sent her to me."

She asked no more questions to pain her, however, but from that day there was an added gentleness in her manner toward her companion.

So while Dr. Winthrop and his family, with the Rochesters, were wintering in Paris, Salome was spending a very pleasant season in Rome with Miss Leonard.

Late in the spring, however, they again turned their faces northward, reaching Paris about the middle of May, and all of our *dramatis personæ* were together within the walls of that doomed city.

Miss Leonard and her party were within a stone's throw of the Place de la Concorde, and did not once dream of the terrible experiences through which they were soon to pass.

Being by themselves, and absorbed in their sightseeing, they did not realize, neither did they have any one to warn them of the danger they were in. They knew

that the city was in a state of unusual excitement, but did not suppose they could suffer from it, and the insurrection burst like a thunderbolt upon them. Every avenue of escape was closed, and they were prisoners in the turbulent place before they were aware of the fact.

They were filled with anxiety and dismay upon discovering their situation; but Miss Leonard, who had been brought up a Catholic, was suddenly inspired with a bright and sagacious plan. She visited one of the convents of the city, explained to the mother-superior her unprotected condition, and begged to be admitted, with her maid and companion, as boarders within its protecting walls.

Her request was readily granted, and the timid trio immediately became inmates of the gray nunnery.

They were there when the cholera broke out, and Miss Leonard was the very first one in the building to fall a victim to the dreaded disease.

She insisted from the first that she could not get well, although she was not violently attacked, and her attendants did not consider her dangerously ill.

During her illness she related her whole history to Salome. We cannot rehearse it here, as it has no direct bearing upon our story, but the young girl did not wonder, as she listened, that the woman's nature had become embittered and warped by her troubles.

"That night, child, when you sang that air from the opera of the 'Bohemian Girl,' I thought I should go insane with the memories it aroused," she explained among other things. "The last time I had heard it my betrothed had sung it to me under peculiarly trying circumstances. A party of young people in Washington had prepared that opera to be rendered at a private musicale. I had the part of Arline, and my betrothed, who was a fine singer and who had come on to Washington for our marriage, which was to occur a week later, had the part of Rupert. The night arrived; the opera was in progress, when, while we two were waiting our turn to go on the stage, we had a bitter quarrel. No matter what it was about; it had been all planned and instigated by others, with the express purpose of breaking off our marriage,

although I did not know this until afterward. A little forbearance, a word or two of explanation on my part would have set everything right; but I was too proud to make it, and the last time I ever spoke to my lover was just as we went on the stage, when he was to sing the song you sang to me. 'I will never forgive you—never!' I cried, as the call was given; and then I sprang toward the wing where I was to enter. When he came on he was pale but calm, and he sang to me as I had never heard him sing before. The pathos and entreaty which he threw into those thrilling words I have never forgotten; they have haunted me through all these long years:

"'When hollow hearts shall wear a mask
'Twill break your own to see,
In such a moment I but ask
That you'll remember me.'

"O Horace! I have remembered," the woman sobbed, breaking down utterly for a moment. "I believe I should have yielded and set everything right when he finished," she resumed, "if I had not chanced to see our enemies exchanging significant sneers as they, too, realized how he had thrown his whole soul into his song. That hardened me again; I turned my back coldly on him the moment the opera was over, and went home alone in my carriage, and thus my life was ruined. My lover left the city the next day, after having sent me a letter breaking our engagement, saying that under the circumstances it would be but mockery to fulfil our vows, and I never saw him again. He died six months later, and then I learned of the wicked plot that had been contrived to separate us. It changed me from a loving, trusting girl into a proud and bitter woman. I hated everybody, and those most who seemed happiest. This mood grew upon me as I grew older, until I believed that nothing could ever soften or change my nature. But, Salome, I am sure the good God sent you to me upon an errand of redeeming love, for you have influenced me as no one ever influenced me before. I tried to resist even you; I said I would hate you as I had hated all others, although you moved me

strangely the moment you came into my presence on that day when you applied for the situation of companion. Then your sweetness and gentleness, your sympathy for me—your faithfulness, when I lay so long ill, finally aroused what little affection there remained in me, and I grew to love you as if you had been my own daughter. I, with my indomitable pride and wilfulness, have been my own worst enemy, Salome; but of late I have really tried to be a better woman—have tried to believe, with you, that there is a kind Father above who does not willingly afflict his children. I have even begun to hope that there may have been a germ of good left in my nature, which you have quickened, and to trust that it will be allowed to develop more fully in the future life. I see all too late, and regret my wasted opportunities here in this world. I have not quite missed all sweetness, for I have at least learned to love you, Salome, and I have enjoyed these months of travel with you more than I can express."

She paused a moment, then went on:

"Before we left home, my child, I made my will, and excepting a few legacies to my servants, some of whom have stood by me in spite of my crabbed ways, and a gift to the blind asylum of New York, I have made you my sole heir——"

"But, dear Miss Leonard——" Salome began, aghast, astonished beyond measure by this unexpected intelligence.

"Do not pain me, Salome by refusing to accept my bequest," interposed the dying woman appealingly, "for it is too late to make any change, even if I knew of any one else to whom to leave my money. The will is in the hands of Mr. Travis, of New York, who has long conducted my business affairs. I have no relatives—there is no one in all the world whom I love save you, and I want you to have whatever I leave. And, Salome, I hope you will remember me kindly—forget, if you can, my disagreeable traits, and if you have found anything pleasant about me, treasure it."

"Indeed I have, dear friend, found much that has been

pleasant in our relations," the young girl returned with streaming eyes. "I began to love you that night when I so wounded you with my song, for I knew how sad your life had been, and my heart went out in sympathy toward you. Then, we always learn to love those for whom we care, you know; while you were ill the bond was strengthened, and now, since we have travelled together, and found that we had so many tastes that were alike, so many sympathies in common, I feel as if I almost belong to you."

Miss Leonard's face lighted with pleasure, and drawing the fair girl down to her, she kissed her fondly.

"Then of course all that I have should be yours," she said. "At all events I have so decreed—I so wish. You have done me good—I die a better woman for your influence. Kiss me again, Salome, and tell me once more that you love me a little."

"Not a little," Salome sobbed, laying her cheek to the wan one on the pillow, "but a great deal. Oh, I wish that you could have been spared to me longer, for I am so alone in the world."

"Bless you, dear child! but you know that I am dying now, though you would not believe it at first—another sunrise will find me beyond that line of mystery which we call death; but I am not afraid—you have taught me to hope for a better life hereafter. Now repeat that psalm you love so well, then I will go to sleep."

She did go quietly to sleep, but it was a slumber from which she never awoke, and in less than six hours she had passed the "line of mystery."

It was a sad bereavement to Salome; but she had no time in which to indulge her grief. She had to attend to all the details pertaining to the burial of her friend, and the simple funeral rites were scarcely over when Harriet was attacked with the plague, and she was obliged to devote all her energies to her.

The woman was very sick, but she had a strong constitution, and, with the good care she received, she was soon on the road toward recovery, while from that time she was ready to lay down her life for the beautiful girl to whom she owed so much.

As soon as she was able to leave her room, she begged Salome to go home to New York; but it was not possible for them to leave the country until the scourge had spent itself, for fear they might carry contagion with them.

"More than this, Harriet," she continued, a holy purpose shining in her lovely eyes, "I do not want to go at present—I want to stay and help to take care of those who suffer——"

"And sacrifice your own precious life," interposed the woman, with an anxious look. "No—no, Miss Salome, don't do that—don't do it; it would break my heart if you should die too, and that's why I'm so anxious to get away."

"I do not believe I shall have the cholera, Harriet," Salome returned with grave assurance, "somehow I feel that I shall not, and I shall certainly use every precaution against it. But the people here are wild with fear, and nurses are very scarce. I know that I am a good nurse, it comes naturally to me to care for the sick, and I know that it is my duty to throw myself into this work; some feeling over which I have no control impels me to do so. If you want to go home, I will ask the sisters to use their influence to get you passed through the lines, and you shall go the first opportunity that offers."

"And leave you here?" cried the woman, aghast. "No—no indeed, Miss Salome! I shall never leave you; it was more on your account that I wanted to go. I've had the plague, so I'm not afraid of that, now, and maybe I can lend a hand myself in the care of others. At all events, if you stay, I shall stay to look after you."

Later, Salome went to the lady-superior, and informed her that she had resolved to go into one of the hospitals as a nurse.

"I am alone, save for the companionship of Harriet, and unprotected in a strange city," she told her, "and, if I may be allowed to do so, I should like to adopt the dress of your sisterhood and go out under the auspices of your convent. This would shield me from all insult and danger, while if I should be attacked by illness I should feel that I had a place of refuge to fly to."

The mother-superior not only gave her consent to her appeal, but her benediction and blessing upon her holy purpose, and told her that she should go out under the name of "Sister Angela."

But Harriet objected to being left alone in the convent.

"The mother is kind and the sisters are good," she said, "but I shall die if I have to be shut up behind these gloomy walls; besides, Miss Salome, they don't live as you ought to live. I wish we could have three or four rooms somewhere that I could make comfortable for you; then when you get tired out with your work you could come home to me and I could look after you."

Salome thought favorably of this and hired a tiny house just under the shadow of the convent, which made a cozy home for Harriet and herself. Every day, after her duties were over, she would go there to rest and to be refreshed and cared for by the faithful woman, whose chief aim in life now seemed to be to devote herself to her, although she told her that she "never could believe she was Miss Salome until she took off those ugly bandages and sombre dress and put on her pretty white wrapper."

Salome had now ample means at her command, for Miss Leonard had taken a generous letter of credit when she went abroad, and before her death she had made this over to her companion. More than that, she had written to her lawyer that she had not long to live and directed him to honor any call which Salome might make upon him for needful funds.

It would be impossible to estimate the amount of good which she accomplished in that plague-smitten city. She was in perfect health; her voyage and subsequent travel, with its pleasant, varying scenes, its comfort and freedom from anxiety, had been of great benefit to her, and she had grown strong and active, and was thus well fortified for the work into which she threw herself.

Every day she went to some hospital and devoted many hours to the care of the sick and the relief of the overworked nurses. She visited many homes, where disease was cutting down the brightest and best, while she never

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refused to relieve poverty and suffering wherever she found them.

And so Dr. Winthrop, while he was also devoting himself to similar work, was brought in contact with her in one of the hospitals where he was stationed. He did not recognize her—no one would have, meeting her by chance and disguised as she was—but the first time she saw him in the ward where she happened to be serving, she was so overcome by the shock of the meeting that she nearly fainted, for until that moment she had not a suspicion that he was in Paris.

The next day she appeared in the same ward again, but more completely disguised by a pair of double blue spectacles, which so thoroughly concealed her eyes and changed her appearance that those who knew her hardly recognized her.

And here she came constantly after that.

In spite of the great wrong which she believed she had suffered through Dr. Winthrop, there was yet a strange fascination in being near him. She loved him still, and after learning that he was practising in that hospital she gave up her work in other places, and attached herself permanently to that institution.

The observing physician had often noticed and admired the manner in which the gentle nun had ministered to the suffering patients in his ward, and so when his friend, Tillinghast, had been stricken down, he had appealed to her for help in the sore emergency. Later, when his own family fell victims to the dread foe, his confidence in her skill and judgment was so strong he had begged her, as we know, to go to them.

Even though he did not dream who she was, though she rarely spoke to him, he felt strangely drawn toward her, as did others also; there was something peculiarly soothing in her quiet presence, and he often found himself watching the motions of her beautiful hands as they so deftly ministered to the comfort of his patients—"blessed hands," he called them, and truly they were blessed.

Often, after he began to recover from his own illness,

he had been seized with a longing to clasp them, and press his grateful lips to them—to tell her that they had saved his life, which, though not especially precious to himself personally, was valuable to others; but her supposed station, her sacred garb, restrained him—she was holy in his eyes, and no act or impulse of his should profane her calling.

CHAPTER XXX.

SALOME BECOMES THE VICTIM OF A VILE SCHEME.

WE have now filled the gap between the time of Salome's disappearance from her husband's home, and the day when Mrs. Rochester and her daughter discovered her identity, upon removing her disguise when she fainted in the hall outside their door.

After her second swoon in their room, she revived only to be seized with a fierce fever, and it became evident that she must now pay the penalty of her recent overwork —that weary nature demanded rest and would have it.

Mrs. and Miss Rochester were dismayed when they found that the girl was going to be sick on their hands.

"What shall we do with her?" the latter asked of her mother, when they found that she was too ill to be moved, and had become so delirious that it would be impossible to conceal her identity if any one were admitted to their rooms.

"There is only one thing that can be done at present," Mrs. Rochester remarked, after a few moments of thought: "you must take her place, and wait upon Dr. Winthrop, while I look after her."

"Can't we send her to some hospital?" questioned Miss Rochester, with a frown.

"I shouldn't dare to have her moved while she is so ill, she might die——"

"If she would be so accommodating it would smooth things wonderfully for us," interposed the younger woman heartlessly.

Mrs. Rochester flushed. Some such thought had been in her own mind, but she had shrunk from giving expression to it.

"She may die with the best of care," she said, "but I'm not quite callous enough, yet, to wish to hasten such

a result, and so we shall have to manage as best we can until she is able to be moved."

"I am willing enough to take her place in attending Dr. Winthrop," returned Miss Rochester, "but I am afraid that he will insist upon prescribing for her if he learns that she is ill."

"We must not let him know that she is in the house," her mother returned; "we will tell him that she was taken suddenly ill, and had to be removed to the convent to be cared for."

"But can we keep her presence here a secret?"

"Yes, easily enough, if we are cautious. Your chamber, fortunately, leads from mine, and there is no other way of reaching it, except by passing through these two rooms. We can keep her there, you can sleep with me, and no one will be the wiser for her presence. I only hope she will not be ill long, and just as soon as she is able to be moved, we will post her off to some place where she will give us no further trouble. I think it is fortunate that she has fallen into our hands in this way," she added thoughtfully; "she might have had this attack in the doctor's rooms, and thus betrayed herself to him—you know what the result would have been in that case. I am thankful, too, that madam and Evelyn are away, and know nothing of the affair."

So Salome was put to bed in Miss Rochester's room, which was the end one of a suite of three, and remote from the living rooms of the villa, and also from the young physician's apartments, and Mrs. Rochester devoted herself to the care of her.

Miss Rochester reported to Dr. Winthrop that Sister Angela, fearing she was going to be seriously ill, had insisted upon returning at once to the convent, where she would have every needful care and attention.

The young man was very much disturbed.

"She has worn herself out taking care of me. I should have let her go last week when she suggested it," he said regretfully. Then he added reproachfully, "Why did you not call me when she fainted?—I might have given her something to help her immediately."

"Oh, mamma would not listen to such a proposition—she said you were not strong enough yet to be troubled; besides, she thought she could do everything that was necessary," answered this glib romancer without the slightest change of color.

"Poor Sister Angela!" sighed Dr. Winthrop. "There was something very sweet about her, in spite of her ugly dress. I never saw a gentler or more efficient nurse—we all owe her more than we can ever repay, I shall miss her sadly."

"I hope you will allow me to take her place as far as I can," Miss Rochester sweetly remarked, and bestowing an appealing glance upon the interesting invalid.

"Thank you," the young man replied. "I suppose I am really able to be without a nurse, although I am not very strong yet, and Norman will be back as soon as he has seen my mother and Evelyn comfortably settled—he ought to be here, I think, by this time to-morrow."

He seemed very anxious, and questioned the girl closely regarding Sister Angela's attack. But though she made as light of it as possible, and exerted herself to amuse and interest him, he was grave and depressed during the remainder of the day.

He did not feel comfortable, either, to have Miss Rochester wait upon him—it seemed too much like assuming that she had a special interest and right in him, and he could not help recalling that unlucky episode in Paris, which had been witnessed by Mrs. Rochester, and so misconstrued. He felt that she had placed and was continuing to place him by these attentions, in a false position.

He was therefore thankful enough when his brother made his appearance the next day and relieved her of her self-imposed task.

Miss Rochester herself appeared to be in better spirits after Norman's return, for in spite of the fact that she was fully determined to marry his brother, she was secretly very deeply in love with him, and knew that his affection for her was even stronger.

With Mrs. Rochester confined to the sick-room of Sa-

lome, and Dr. Winthrop not yet able to be about the house, there was ample opportunity for these two to indulge their preference for the society of each other. Norman Winthrop really and truly loved the girl, and had determined to win her in spite of the contract that was so much talked about; but while Miss Rochester was steadfastly set upon securing the Rochester-Hamilton fortunes, she nevertheless craved excitement and amusement, and enjoyed coquetting with one who paid her such delightful compliments and who appeared so genuinely devoted to her.

Much of her time, after his return, was spent in roaming about the grounds of the chateau with him, greatly to her mother's annoyance, but much to Dr. Winthrop's relief and comfort, although he did not know how she was employing her time.

Salome was very ill for a week, but not delirious after the first day or two. She refused to have a physician, telling Mrs. Rochester that, if she would follow her directions, she could treat her well enough without one, since she had no local disease, and nature only required rest and some simple remedies to restore her to her normal condition.

Mrs. Rochester was only too glad to dispense with a doctor, for she knew that his regular visits would excite comment among the servants, since Dr. Winthrop did not now need assistance, and she was determined to keep the girl's presence in the house a secret if she could possibly do so.

After the first week her fever subsided and she began to mend, and by the end of three weeks she said that she thought she was able to return to Paris.

"What are you going to do when you get well?" Mrs. Rochester asked, while they were talking the matter over.

"I intend to go back to my work in the hospitals, for the present," Salome answered.

Mrs. Rochester did not like the idea of this, for if Dr. Winthrop should also resume his practice there was great danger that the two might be reunited, in spite of the fact that Salome did not seem to wish her identity dis-

covered. If she could only get her to leave the country there would be no need of trying to carry out her dangerous scheme of shutting her up in some institution.

"You are not strong enough for nursing, Salome. "Why don't you go home to America?" she asked.

"Do you ask me that? Where should I find a home in America?" inquired Salome bitterly.

"You can go back to the old place and remain there, if you wish, until we return."

"I do not wish to go back to the old place," said Salome coldly.

"But it is not proper for you to remain in Paris alone; you are liable to get into trouble, going about by yourself," returned Mrs. Rochester, somewhat impatiently at being thus opposed.

"I am not alone—I am at present under the protection of the gray sisters."

"Do you intend to ally yourself with them permanently?"

"No; only as long as I can be especially useful in this emergency."

"Perhaps you are seeking for a reconciliation with Dr. Winthrop—possibly you think you may yet win him to acknowledge you as his wife, or rather lure him to ratify that ceremony which occurred in Boston. Is that what you are here for?" demanded Mrs. Rochester, searching the young face opposite her with an eagle glance.

Salome flushed a vivid scarlet, and a look of anguish almost convulsed her features for a moment.

Then she said proudly:

"No, I could never wish any man to acknowledge me as his wife, who had once thrust me from his home—I did not even know that Dr. Winthrop was in Paris until I met him in the hospital."

Mrs. Rochester's face lighted.

"I am glad to know you are so sensible," she said. "Of course, you could not expect him to acknowledge you after he had committed himself to another. Who is the Harriet Winter who came here to nurse us through your recommendation?" she continued, with some cu-

riosity, for she had recognized the woman as an American, and wondered how she happened to be associated with Salome.

"She is a woman who came to Europe on the same steamer with me," the young girl evasively answered.

"How is it you happen to be so friendly?—she seems a very common sort of person."

"She is at least a true-hearted person," Salome returned, with some warmth. "She was maid to a lady who recently died of cholera, and whom I nursed. She also was very ill, and I took care of her."

Salome did not consider it needful to give further particulars regarding her relations with Miss Leonard or Harriet.

"Do you get paid for your services in the hospital?" queried Mrs. Rochester, wondering how she lived if she did not.

"No."

"Then what supports you—how can you live?"

"I have sufficient for my needs," Salome quietly responded.

"You are fortunate, truly," sneered her companion, "though to be sure you must have been well paid for your services for this family, and—I will add something to that when you go away."

"You offer to give money to me!" Salome cried, with blazing eyes.

The woman colored vividly, while her glance wavered before the almost fierce indignation of her companion, and Salome went on vehemently.

"I beg you will not add insult to injury. You have wronged me enough already; and now if you will provide me with a carriage I will leave for Paris immediately. I do not wish to remain here another hour."

"Very well, you shall return to Paris, but not to-day; you shall go to-morrow. But you need not be so resentful, Salome; it is your own fault that you and I are not better friends. If you had only done as I wished——"

Salome lifted her hand with an imperative gesture, but her face was very pale.

"Never refer to that subject again," she said; "the past is past, and it is useless to talk about it; and as for the lack of friendship between you and me, Heaven and your own conscience know whether it is your fault or mine. There are some other things, too, for which you may be called to account by and by."

"What do you mean? You are not going to——" began Mrs. Rochester, in undisguised alarm.

"I do not know what I may be tempted to do if you goad me much further," the almost desperate girl returned bitterly; "therefore I wish to get away from you as soon as possible."

"Very well, you shall go to-morrow; I promise you that you shall go to-morrow," Mrs. Rochester replied, but with a peculiar smile.

She left the room almost immediately, sought an interview with her daughter, whom she informed with much excitement of the conversation just narrated, after which she herself hastened with all possible dispatch to Paris.

Two hours later she might have been seen sitting in the gloomy reception-room of a celebrated "nervine" establishment of that city, engaged in confidential conversation with a middle-aged, rather prepossessing, but very stern and resolute-looking man.

"You say that the young lady, your daughter, is about twenty-three years of age?" he inquired, making a note upon some tablets which he held in his hand. "And her name is——"

"Salome."

"Ah! Salome Rochester, like your own, madam?"

"Yes," but madam flushed vividly as she thus replied.

"She has been ill, you say," the gentleman continued, "her nerves are in a peculiar state—in fact, her mind is affected with strange ideas, which make it unsafe for her to be left to herself, and you desire to leave her in my care until you return from your travels, or—she is better?"

"Yes. The girl is possessed with the idea that she must go into the hospitals of the city as a nurse; she has assumed the dress of a gray nun, and declares this work is her mission—a most absurd fancy, I am sure

you will agree when you see her in her present weakened state," Mrs. Rochester volubly explained. "I am travelling with friends; we go to Rome very soon for the winter, and my plan is to leave her with you until—we return. I wish her to have the best of care, and all the privileges that are possible without infringing upon the rules of your establishment; but you are on no account to allow her to go away from here. I shall hold you responsible for her safety until I come to claim her."

"We are willing to be so held, madam, for—the usual considerations," the man returned, with the politest of bows; "that is a part of our business. When will madam bring the young lady?"

"To-morrow, but I do not know just how to arrange for her coming," Mrs. Rochester said with a slight show of nervousness. "I certainly cannot accompany her, as she imagines that I have become her enemy," and the lady wiped away an imaginary tear.

"Ah, it often occurs that people in her unfortunate condition, acquire sudden aversion to their best friends," the learned doctor sympathetically remarked.

"And—and you may even find some difficulty about persuading her to enter this institution; she is very wilful at times, and cunning as well," said his companion.

"I understand, madam, she is unconscious of her malady, and does not like to be governed; we will arrange everything to your satisfaction. We will send our own carriage for mademoiselle; there is an entrance to the institution that is like a private house; the driver will be ordered to stop just opposite and discover that a portion of the harness has suddenly given out, and must be repaired before the young lady can go on; she will be cordially invited to step inside during the delay, and—all the rest will be easily arranged. Does the little stratagem please madam?

"Perfectly," responded Mrs. Rochester, with a sigh of relief, as she arose to leave. "At what hour shall I expect the carriage?"

"Not until the cool of the evening. It is not well for an invalid to travel during the heat of the day, and it

will be better that it should be dusk when mademoiselle arrives, lest her suspicions be aroused and we have trouble."

"Very well; I leave it all with you," Mrs. Rochester said, as she poured a handful of glittering gold coins into the doctor's soft palm. Then she went away, well pleased with the success of her errand and congratulating herself that Salome was well disposed of, at least for the present; what future disposition should be made of her, she would have to decide later.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SALOME WITNESSES A HEART-RENDING TABLEAU.

AFTER Mrs. Rochester's departure for Paris, which, however, was known only to her daughter, Salome, who had been sitting up for the second time, although she had not yet been dressed, thought she would try to put on her clothing, and thus get a little accustomed to exertion, preparatory to going away the next day.

She was still very weak, and the effort made her weary and almost faint, so that she was obliged to lie down again upon her bed, where she instantly dropped asleep.

She slept for more than an hour, and felt greatly refreshed when she awoke.

"I wonder if I could walk about a little," she said to herself. "I must get accustomed to the use of my feet. I wish Harriet were here to lend me her strong arm; I wonder why she has not been out to inquire for me! I hope she has not been ill again."

She reached out for a bowl of beef-tea which stood upon the table, and drank a generous portion of it to brace herself for the effort she was contemplating; then rising, she began to move about the room, and was surprised to find herself stronger than she had supposed.

The door was open between the room she occupied and the one beyond, so she prolonged her walk into this, going very slowly, and taking hold of various objects to steady her steps.

She traversed the whole length of both rooms thus; then her strength gave out, and she sank panting into a low rocker to rest.

The door leading into Mrs. Rochester's parlor was directly behind her, and partly open.

Salome had believed it to be empty until she was seated, when, to her consternation, she heard a strangely familiar voice, intense with passion, exclaim:

"Sadie, you do not answer me; tell me that you do love me in spite of this unnatural contract, which would have consigned you to a man whether you could love him or not? why couldn't they have left people free to choose for themselves? Tell me, Sadie, I must have the truth."

"Yes, then, if you will have the confession. I have loved you from the first hour of our meeting," was the reply which came to Salome's ears in Miss Rochester's tones, while she experienced a feeling as of suffocation, and seemed turning to stone.

Then, powerless to move or fly from the terrible ordeal, she heard that other voice cry out triumphantly:

"My darling! my heart's idol! I knew it; you could not hide it from me, even though you have tried to be so proper and demure at times. My love, my love, we were made for each other, and I would not exchange the bliss of this moment for a hundred Rochester-Hamilton fortunes."

"But——" began Miss Rochester.

"We will have no 'buts,' my heart's queen," interrupted her companion, "I will not permit a worldly word or thought to mar this hallowed hour; you are mine, heart and soul, as I am yours——"

Salome could endure no more. The sound of that voice, uttering such passionate declarations of love, smote her with agony that was worse than death, and, nerved by despair, she sprang softly to her feet, turned one wild, anguished look toward the room behind her, and saw a picture that nearly drove her mad.

Standing with their backs toward the door were two figures, one—as she supposed—the man whom she had once fondly believed to be her husband, the other the girl who, for years, had been her worst enemy, locked in a lovers' embrace.

Covering her eyes as if the sight had suddenly smitten her blind, the suffering young wife noiselessly groped

her way back to her own room, where she threw herself prone upon her face on her bed.

She had thought that the bitterness of death was passed when she believed herself thrust out of her husband's home; when she believed he had become wearied of her—weaned from her by the sneers and jibes of his proud mother and sister; but that seemed as nothing now, compared to the scene she had just witnessed, and which seemed to have been branded upon her brain with a red-hot iron.

Of course we know, although she could not, that Miss Rochester's companion was not Dr. Winthrop. We know it must have been none other than Norman Winthrop, who had thus passionately declared himself to the reckless coquette, who had won his heart and lost her own while indulging in her favorite pastime of flirting.

The young man had plainly shown his growing infatuation for her ever since his arrival in Paris, and had secretly avowed that he would win her, in spite of the Rochester-Hamilton contract and her evident determination to fulfil its conditions.

The day when matters were thus brought to a crisis was a very warm one in September, and Miss Rochester, her mother having gone to Paris, sat alone in their pretty parlor, reading a new novel.

Norman Winthrop, while passing through the hall, glanced in at the half-open door, saw the girl, and she looked so lovely and enticing in her dainty white costume, as she sat by a shaded window, that he stopped upon the threshold and begged permission to enter.

"Mamma is away," Miss Rochester said demurely, but looking up with alluring roguishness from the book in her hands.

"It is not mamma whom I wish to see," the young man answered, with an admiring look, as he boldly stepped within the room and approached her.

She did not chide him as he sat down beside her, for she was lonely, and felt glad of anything that would pass away a dull hour, and they sat there chatting in low tones upon various topics for half an hour or more.

Then, all at once, there fell over them a significant

silence, which was finally abruptly interrupted by Mr. Winthrop, who recklessly broke down all barriers, and declared:

"Sadie, I love you; you know it—must long have known it. Now tell me that you return my affection, and I shall be the happiest man upon the continent."

This outburst had occurred just before Salome reached the rocker in Mrs. Rochester's chamber, and then she had caught his next words:

"Sadie, you do not answer me," etc.

Salome believed that the man who was speaking was he whom she loved—whose wife she had once believed herself to be. The voice was the same, the form, face, and bearing were those of Dr. Winthrop, as she just caught a glimpse of him when she shot that one despairing look inside the room.

She had heard Dr. Winthrop speak of his brother, but she had never been told that he was a twin, nor that the resemblance between the two was so strong that their most intimate friends had difficulty in distinguishing between them. And, strange as it may seem, she had never encountered Norman Winthrop during all her nursing in the villa. The rooms occupied by the various invalids were in different portions of the extensive building, and the nurses in charge were confined exclusively to their separate patients.

During her previous sojourn there, after Mr. Winthrop's death, Salome had devoted herself to Evelyn, who was the most dangerously ill of those who recovered. Norman Winthrop had nursed the butler, under his brother's direction and with his help, while the other nurses had attended Madame Winthrop and the Rochesters.

Salome scarcely left Evelyn's room until she was out of danger. Her meals were served in a small ante-chamber adjoining, and she also slept there during her hours for rest, Mrs. Rochester relieving her during such times.

Since Dr. Winthrop's illness, his brother had not seemed quite himself, and the physician had forbidden him to go near the sick man, saying he was liable to contract the disease and must use every precaution against it; so Mr.

Tillinghast had relieved Salome when she needed rest, and had been very helpful and considerate at other times. Thus she had never seen Norman Winthrop near enough to realize his wonderful resemblance to his brother, and it is not strange that she was deceived regarding the identity of Miss Rochester's ardent lover.

It was a pity that she had not remained in Mrs. Rochester's room a few moments longer and heard the conclusion of the interview; she would at least have suffered less by learning the truth.

"Hush!" Miss Rochester said, just after Salome had fled from the scene; "you must not talk to me like this—I must not listen, and you know why."

Norman Winthrop's arms dropped from the supple form, which he had clasped to him in a passionate embrace when the girl had owned her love for him.

"You do not mean that, Sadie, after what you have confessed to me," he said sternly.

"But I do. I ought never to have betrayed myself, but you wrung it from me," she returned, with flushed cheeks and downcast eyes.

"Am I to understand that you still consider yourself bound by that wretched contract—that you intend to marry my brother, when you have told me that you love me?"

"Yes, I must."

"Why?"

"You know; I must forfeit Brookside and a hundred thousand dollars if I do not, and there will be nothing left for mamma and me but the income of that paltry fifty thousand dollars."

Norman Winthrop groaned.

"What an unnatural thing for a father to do!" he cried angrily. "The man must have had a heart of stone. But what is money, Sadie, compared with the happiness of a life-time? I shall have something from my father's estate, though of course it wll be but a trifle compared with the united estates of Brookside and Englehurst. But I love you, Sadie; I will work for you; I will make a fortune for you, if you will give me the

incentive. O my darling, do not let your ambition ruin both our lives!"

Miss Rochester looked grave and thoughtful for a few moments after this earnest appeal. She was almost tempted to yield and become a good woman—a loved and loving wife, for she knew that she loved Norman Winthrop as she could never love another.

But pride, ambition, and fear of her mother conquered the promptings of her better nature.

"You must not tempt me," she whispered hoarsely. "I shall hold by the contract—unless your brother refuses to abide by it."

"Then I shall go to him and tell him how we stand," cried her companion excitedly. "True would never hold a woman bound—not even for millions—who had given her heart to another."

"You shall not—if you lisp a word of what has passed between us I shall hate you, for—I have sworn that I will be mistress of Brookside and Englehurst," the girl passionately returned, though she was white to her lips.

"Sadie Rochester, you are a heartless flirt! You have won my heart and now you cast it from you as a worthless thing. I know I am not a paragon, like my brother—I have been the black sheep in the family ever since I was a boy; but you might have made a good man of me—you have made a devil instead."

He turned abruptly from her and left the rooms, while the proud girl sank back in her chair and wept as she seldom wept.

Poor Salome, meanwhile, was no less wretched. Until that hour she believed she had schooled her heart to give up her idol—that she had relinquished all hope of ever being anything to him again.

But now she knew that she had not. She realized now that, during all her intercourse with him—while she was nursing his friend in the hospital; as she saw his devotion to others and learned to know more fully his goodness of heart, his nobility of soul; while he lay so sick himself—so helpless and dependent—she had been growing to love him more fondly, more idolatrously than before.

How she hung over him when he lay so deathly ill! How she had watched every symptom—every breath, even! How she had despaired when she had thought he must go down into the dark valley—how once, when she believed that another dawn would find him cold in death, she had almost been tempted to tear away those unsightly bandages from her face—cast aside those hideous glasses, reveal her identity, and beg for one last word of love from his lips!

Then how she had exulted when she saw the sluggish tide of life turn in his favor, and knew that he would live, if she did not relax her vigilance!

Oh, she had not spared herself, she had again won him back from the grave, and he seemed, more than ever, a part of her very self.

She lay there now upon her bed, more wretched than she had ever been, thinking of all this; remembering with a thrill, how, when he had slept, she had watched his dear face by the hour, stealthily kissing his hair, his hand, even the pillow on which he lay, but believing that, when he should get well, she could go away and leave him, never hoping, never expecting, any return.

But she knew that, through all, there had been a faint hope in her heart that something would occur to reunite them, and he would love her again as he had seemed to do during those few happy days in New York, just before his departure for Europe. Even after Madame Winthrop had told her that he was betrothed to Miss Rochester, she had half believed that he meant her when he called for his "darling."

Now all these fond hopes were at an end, for she believed she had heard with her own ears his passionate declaration of love for another—had seen him clasp another to his heart, even as he had clasped her on that last morning in New York, and that other Sarah Rochester.

What irony of fate, indeed, as the girl herself had once mockingly remarked. How could she endure it?

For hours she lay there and fought with her rebellious heart, and against the doom which seemed to lie before him.

How could she bear to give him up to one whom she knew to be false to the very core of her being?

He was still noble and true, in spite of the fact that he had been influenced to do her a great wrong, and she knew that his whole future would be ruined if he should marry such a scheming, ambitious, unprincipled woman.

She could prevent it, she knew, by the utterance of a single sentence; for Truman Winthrop would never knowingly wed a woman so depraved as Sarah Rochester to gain a thousand fortunes.

Should she tell him? should she try to save him from such a fate, even though she might never hope to regain his love for herself? Should she take vengeance upon those two women for the injuries of the past by thus blasting all their hopes for the future?

Ah, no; desperate as she was, heart-broken, weary of life, she would never be actuated by a feeling of revenge; she would prefer to suffer on in silence, as she had suffered for so long, rather than lower herself in her own esteem, or violate her conscience and the commands of the Master, whom she tried to serve, by thus claiming "an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth." Besides, if Truman Winthrop loved the girl as madly as he appeared to love her, why should she undeceive him as to her character? He would perhaps hate her for it, and she would gain nothing by it.

When the sun had set and the day was drawing to a close, her battle was fought, her victory won, and she lay quiet and peaceful, but weak and so weary from the strife that she would gladly have laid down the burden of life then and there.

But even this mood, this desire to be at rest, passed after a time.

"I have one true and honest friend," she thought. "Harriet, at least, is faithful to me; I will go back to her, and when I get strong again, we will take up our work together once more. I can at least do some good with this money that Miss Leonard has given me, if I cannot be happy."

She fell asleep soon after, and did not awake until some one touched her upon the shoulder.

Her eyes flashed open with a startled look, and she found Miss Rochester standing over her, a cruel smile wreathing her lips, and she sat up shivering as she recalled where she had last seen her.

"Well, Miss Howland, alias Sister Angela, alias—well, no matter who else—were you edified by the tableau that you witnessed a while ago from the other room?"

The girl had caught sight of Salome as she was fleeing from the scene, and her quick mind had grasped the situation at once, and she had resolved to use the circumstance to further her own schemes.

Salome flushed hotly.

"I did not know there was any one in the room," she faltered.

"Well, after what you have seen, you surely can have no desire to claim Dr. Winthrop as your husband—even if he were willing to——"

"No—no!" interposed Salome, a note of agony in her tones; "if the marriage was illegal, as you have all told me, I have now no wish to have it ratified; even if it had been legal I should wish to have it annulled—I would wish to hold no man bound who was ashamed to own me as his wife—who loved and desired to marry another."

"Do you really mean that, Salome?" Miss Rochester demanded, in a tone of repressed eagerness. "If so, you can prove it."

"Yes, I mean it. How can I prove it more fully?" she asked, with white lips.

"By writing a letter that I will dictate. Will you?"

"To—to him?" the young wife stammered, a terrible sinking at her heart.

"Not for the world? Are you a fool?" cried her companion, with a start and frown. Then she continued, "you know that I am going to marry him——"

"And commit a fearful wrong," interposed Salome sternly.

"What is that to you, since you do not want him your-

self? I shall have to answer for my own sins," was the rude retort.

"But I could prevent it. Oh, perhaps it is my duty to prevent it," cried Salome, in distress.

"You will not dare!" cried Miss Rochester fiercely.

"I should dare, if I believed it right," Salome said firmly, "but under the circumstances I cannot—matters must adjust themselves as they will."

"And you will write the letter I desire?" she eagerly questioned.

"I must know just what you want before I promise."

"Well, since I am to marry Dr. Winthrop," Miss Rochester began, "I cannot help feeling a little squeamish about the ceremony which you two went through. Of course Dr. Winthrop believes that he is doubly free, for he thinks you are dead, and you do not wish to undeceive him?"

"No," but the white lips quivered painfully.

"Then if he should marry me, and by any possibility it should be discovered, by and by, that the ceremony between you would hold, don't you see what an unpleasant predicament he would be in—what scandal and trouble would ensue if your existence should be discovered?"

"Oh, why will you torture me thus?" moaned Salome.

"Dr. Winthrop could be arrested for bigamy," her tormentor went on relentlessly. "I don't say would be, mind you—I am only suggesting a possibility, which for my own peace of mind I want to guard against. Since you do not wish him to know that you are alive, or assert any claim upon him, you might at least be willing to signify as much."

"How can I—what good would it do?" Salome asked, not clearly comprehending the plot.

"Wait; I will dash off the letter as I want it," said her companion.

CHAPTER XXXII.

SALOME IS LURED INTO A TRAP.

MISS ROCHESTER seated herself at a table, and drawing forth writing materials, wrote rapidly for a few moments. Then she handed the communication to Salome to read. It ran thus:

"*To Conrad Converse, Esq.*

"DEAR SIR:—I went through the marriage ceremony in Boston, Mass., with a man known as Truman Winthrop, M.D., of New York city. My name was given as Salome Howland, although the latter is not my true surname. I have been told that the marriage was illegal on that account; I was repudiated and deserted because of it. Later, I was reported dead, and Dr. Winthrop, who still believes that I am not living, is about to marry again. I do not wish him to be undeceived, and I appeal to you to procure—if his marriage with me were legal—a decree of divorce, without any publicity whatever. Spare no expense, and let it be done at once."

"You are to sign that, and then I will attend to all the rest," Miss Rochester remarked, when she saw that Salome had finished reading the missive.

Salome did not make any reply, but sat with pale face and bowed head, trying to think what she would do.

"If his marriage with me were legal!"

Those words kept running through her mind, and she wondered now that she had never thought of going to some lawyer to ascertain the truth. There surely must be some doubt in Miss Rochester's mind about it not being so, or she would not be so eager to secure her sanction to a divorce. She shivered over the word. No

divorce would ever make her free; she had bound herself, heart and soul, to this man, and she should feel herself morally bound to him as long as she lived, even if she were not according to the strict letter of the law.

But, she reasoned, he no longer loved her; he had thrust her out of his home, and now, believing that she was dead, he wanted to marry another. Ought she to stand in his way?

"How would he feel if he knew that I am not dead?" she asked herself; and then grew faint and sick as the thought came to her that he would doubtless wish her so if he should learn the truth—that he would feel that she was the destroyer of his peace and happiness, if she should appear before him. How could she think otherwise when she had heard such passionate words of love from his lips, and seen him holding her enemy clasped so fondly to his heart?

No, she had no wish to undeceive him, she would never interfere with his happiness, and he should be free, if any act of hers could make him so. Her life was ruined, why should she hesitate about giving him the right to do as he wished? She would sign the letter, and thus end forever all doubt, all trouble.

She put out her hand for the pen.

The girl, watching her so intently, dipped it freshly in the ink, and laid it between her fingers.

She wrote her name in a bold, clear hand, at the end of the letter, then passed it to Miss Rochester without a word.

She seized it, a gleam of triumph flashing from her eyes.

"There, Salome, for once you have done a sensible thing," she said, and she folded the paper, and thrust it into her bosom. "It has really made me quite uneasy to think of marrying Dr. Winthrop, since I discovered that you were not dead; but this will make everything all right. Mr. Converse is a very expert lawyer, who makes a specialty of obtaining divorces without publicity, and there will be no fear that this will not be granted, provided he gets enough for his services, and since I have

already written to him something regarding the matter he will doubtless expedite the matter. Ah, here comes mamma."

The girl arose as she caught the sound of her mother's footsteps in the adjoining room, and went to meet her with an exultant look on her face, and wholly unconscious that Salome, tried beyond endurance, had fainted, and lay like one dead upon the bed.

The next morning, Mrs. Rochester saw that Salome was served a tempting and nourishing breakfast, for she was determined that she should have all the strength necessary to enable her to leave the villa that day. Her dinner, also, was carefully prepared and appetizing, and after she had partaken of it she made her lie down to rest, and charged her to sleep if she could.

"You must be as fresh as possible, for it is quite a drive into Paris," she observed. "The carriage will come for you late this afternoon—I ordered one from the city, as I thought it would attract less notice than to take Dr. Winthrop's from the stable."

Salome submitted to whatever arrangements she chose to make without a word of objection; all she cared for was to get away, and go back to the true-hearted honest Harriet, who, she knew, would care for her most tenderly.

Mrs. Rochester managed everything very adroitly. She had authorized her daughter to be on the lookout for the carriage far down the avenue, and order it to be driven to a rarely used side-entrance of the chateau.

Then she conducted Salome to it by a private staircase, and she was off without any one, save those two women, knowing that a carriage had come and gone.

The poor heart-broken girl heaved a sigh of relief when the vehicle passed out of the villa grounds upon the highway, and, throwing herself back among the cushions, she gave way to a passionate burst of weeping.

Salome was so exhausted by her weeping and the excitement of leaving the villa, that she soon dropped into a doze, and did not awake until the carriage stopped so suddenly as to almost throw her off her seat.

It was quite dark and she could only distinguish ob-

jects indistinctly, but she saw that she was in a broad, quiet street, where there seemed to be fine residences within inclosures that were ornamented with trees and shrubs.

The driver just then made his appearance at the window, a look of well-assumed distress on his face.

"Pardon, mademoiselle," he said, "but one of the traces has parted—it will detain us a little."

"Ah, can it be mended easily?" Salome questioned nervously, for it was so dark that she was very anxious to reach home and Harriet.

"Perhaps—we will see," and the man disappeared.

Presently she heard him muttering angrily to himself, as if he had discovered more mischief than he had at first seen, and then a gentleman came slowly out from the inclosure near by, and made some inquiries in a kindly tone, though Salome could not catch his words.

The driver explained his trouble with much volubility and irritation, and with many profuse regrets on account of the "annoyance to mademoiselle, the sister."

Presently the gentleman made his appearance at the carriage window, and lifting his hat, respectfully addressed her.

"Pardon, sister," he began; "the coachman says he must take one of the horses and go on to his stable to get a new trace; it seems not the right thing for a lady to sit alone in the street at this hour of the evening. My residence is just here, and at your service; my wife will be charmed to entertain you while you wait. Will the sister do me the favor to accept my hospitality, while the driver attends to the broken harness?"

"Thanks, monsieur," returned Salome thoughtfully. Then she asked, "is it far to the Rue de——?"

"Mon Dieu!" responded the gentleman, in a tone of surprise, "the sister will have to ride more than a mile yet."

Salome sighed regretfully. She knew that her strength would not allow her to walk such a distance, and she must, perforce, wait until the return of the man.

She did not like the idea of sitting there alone in the

street; neither did she like to trust herself with an entire stranger, even though she believed that her nun's costume would protect her against wrong or insult.

Yet the invitation was tempting; the stranger had spoken of his wife—he seemed a gentleman, and had addressed her most courteously, while she judged from his tone and appearance that he must be a middle-aged man.

She glanced toward the house he had indicated. The lights were glimmering cheerfully through the trees, and she could plainly discern the figure of a woman sitting upon the broad porch. It was warm and close and lonely in the carriage, and it looked very inviting within the inclosure.

"Has the sister travelled far?" inquired the gentleman, who was becoming a trifle impatient over her evident hesitation and reluctance to accept his offer.

"Six or seven miles," Salome replied.

"Ah! doubtless upon some errand of mercy, and surely you must be weary. Pray, good sister, come in and be refreshed."

The invitation was heartily, yet courteously, given, while he at the same time turned the handle and opened the door for her to alight. Salome's scruples were overcome, and she acceded to his request.

He helped her to the ground, and then she followed him inside the adjacent grounds, without a suspicion of the trap into which she had so readily fallen.

Reaching the house, the gentleman explained briefly the accident to the lady sitting upon the porch whom he introduced as his wife—Madame Arnot.

Madam greeted the sister with charming frankness and cordiality, regretted the accident which had caused such delay and annoyance, and, bringing forward a comfortable chair, invited her to be seated.

She then began chatting in an easy manner, while now and then monsieur would join in the conversation.

Thus an hour passed, and Salome began to grow anxious and impatient to resume her journey.

At last she suggested that it was getting late, where-

upon monsieur sprang to his feet, remarking he would go to the gate and ascertain if her coachman had returned.

He soon came back, saying the carriage was still there, but there were no signs of the driver.

Salome looked troubled, but madam said never mind, all would soon be well; then she laughingly quoted the proverb, "Be careful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares," at the same time ringing a little silver bell.

A servant appeared almost immediately, bearing a tray upon which there was arranged a dainty meal. She deposited it upon the table, which she wheeled forward into the centre of the porch, and set chairs for three around it.

Madam then rose and politely invited Salome to join herself and her husband, and at once began to serve them in an easy and graceful manner.

The young girl was hungry, and really enjoyed the delicious meal, although she was conscious of a feeling of uneasiness and anxiety to get away to her own quiet little home and Harriet.

Another hour passed thus, for monsieur and madam were both good eaters as well as good talkers, and they had not finished their meal when there came a loud ring at the gate.

Monsieur went to answer it and soon returned saying the coachman had come back, but without having succeeded in getting his harness mended; neither had he been able to replace the broken trace with a whole one, for there was a grand wedding, and every horse, carriage, and harness belonging to his employer was in use. Mademoiselle would have to wait where she was until morning, and then he would come for her.

Salome started to her feet in dismay at this intelligence.

"Oh, no, I cannot!" she cried; "I must get home. Why did he not go elsewhere and send me another carriage?"

"Surely he might have done so," monsieur returned; "but the stupid fellow evidently did not think of such

a thing, and at once rode away after explaining the situation."

"What shall I do? "Salome exclaimed, in a troubled tone.

"Pray—pray do not be so disturbed; Sister Angela is most welcome to a lodging here, if she will so honor us," said madam cordially.

"And it is late," interposed monsieur, glancing at his watch—"after ten. I beg the sister will make herself at home, and accept our hospitality as freely as it is offered."

Salome looked from one to the other. Both faces were frank and smiling, and yet, in spite of their apparent kindness, she shrank with a feeling of distrust from remaining with them over-night. But what could she do?

She was helpless. Her coachman had gone, and she could not go out by herself at that hour of the evening to seek another carriage. If monsieur had but offered to send for one, or to have her taken home in his own; but he did not, and she was too timid to ask the favor of him.

So, after considering their proposition for a moment, she thanked them for their hospitality, said she would remain, and requested that she might be allowed to retire immediately.

Madam arose with alacrity, and said that she would herself attend her to her chamber.

She led her within the house, and up a long stairway to the second story, where the corridor seemed to be cut off from some other portion of the house by portières.

Here she opened a door and ushered her into a small room that was simply but very neatly furnished.

She provided Salome with a night-dress, remarking that she would find towels and toilet articles in a drawer of the dressing-case; then, bidding her a kind and cheerful good-night, she left the room, quietly closing the door after her and noiselessly turning the well-oiled lock until the bolt shot into its socket.

Salome was very weary as well as homesick, and, quickly undressing, crept into bed and was soon sleeping soundly.

When she awoke in the morning, the sun was shining brightly into her room, and she felt her spirits rise under the influence of its genial rays. In a little while she would be safe with Harriet, and then her troubles would be over.

She arose and dressed, realizing that she was much stronger—that her long, restful sleep had greatly refreshed her. Then she went to her window and pulled aside the pretty draperies which hung over it, when to her astonishment she found herself before an iron-grated casement.

"Why, how strange!" she exclaimed, and looking out she saw that the building she was in inclosed three sides of a square, which was beautifully laid out with beds of flowers and variegated foliage. A fountain was in the centre, while numerous rustic seats were scattered about the grass-plots and finely gravelled walks.

But as her eye traversed the circuit of the spacious building, she noticed that almost every window was grated like her own.

What could it mean? Surely it was not a prison that she was in! and yet it had the appearance of one.

She was startled and depressed by the discovery; still she told herself that whatever the nature of the place might be, it could not affect her, since she was simply the guest of Monsieur and Madame Arnot for the night.

She resolved, however, that she would leave at as early an hour as possible, she would not wait for her coachman but order another carriage; and with this in view, she put on her bonnet and wrap and made herself ready for her departure.

But to her consternation, when she attempted to open her door she found that it was locked on the outside, and her heart sank within her.

She dropped, pale and trembling, into a chair, a vague suspicion of the truth beginning to dawn upon her.

Presently she heard steps outside her door, the key was softly turned, and the next moment a maid entered, bearing a tray upon which was a nice breakfast.

She put it upon the table, and then rolled it toward

Salome, who thought the girl regarded her curiously, although she greeted her with a pleasant "good-morning."

"I do not care for any breakfast," Salome remarked. "I will go down and consult with Monsieur Arnot about sending for a carriage immediately."

"Mademoiselle will surely eat something first," the girl said in a coaxing tone, such as she might have used toward a fractious child.

"No, thank you; I will go directly to Monsieur Arnot," and Salome arose, as she spoke, to leave the room.

But her attendant dexterously slipped before her and turned the key in the lock.

"Mademoiselle cannot go down just now," she said firmly.

"Why not?" Salome demanded with kindling eyes, and resenting the restraint thus imposed upon her.

"Because she is the patient of Dr. Arnot, and he will himself visit mademoiselle when he makes his usual round of the wards. Come, now, here is a nice bit of broiled steak, some fine hot rolls, delicious coffee, and luscious berries with cream," the girl concluded soothingly, while she arranged the viands temptingly before her charge.

But Salome again sank weakly upon her chair.

Those words, "the patient of Dr. Arnot—he will visit mademoiselle when he makes his usual round of the wards," had opened her eyes to the terrible truth.

She knew now where she was, understood the meaning of those grated windows and her locked door.

She was an inmate of a private insane asylum, and like a flash it had come to her that she had been cunningly decoyed into the abominable place.

She remembered now the peculiar look that had swept over Mrs. Rochester's face when she had insisted upon returning to Paris, and the equally peculiar inflection of her tones when she had replied, "You shall go to-morrow —I promise you, you shall go to-morrow."

Then she recalled the fact that she had suddenly disappeared and been absent all the afternoon, and she knew that she must have come to Paris and arranged this plot to shut her up, where she would have no power to inter-

fere with any of her plans or to reveal to any one, if she was so disposed, what she knew regarding her past life.

She saw that Mrs. Rochester feared that she would reveal her identity to Dr. Winthrop, and thus frustrate all her designs and her daughter's prospects.

"Oh," she murmured, with a thrill of horror, as she dropped her face upon her hands, "have I not already suffered enough at their hands without being buried alive like this?"

The girl who had brought in her breakfast took advantage of this moment of weakness and stole softly from the room again, locking the door after her.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SALOME MAKES ATTEMPTS TO SECURE HER LIBERTY.

IT seemed to Salome as she sat there alone in her room, after her attendant had left her, as if this fresh trouble was more than she could bear.

She was a prisoner in a great insane asylum in the heart of Paris, and no one in all the world, save Mrs. Rochester, knew where she was. She was lost! She might almost as well have been dead and buried.

She blamed herself now for having consented to enter the house at Monsieur Arnot's invitation. It would have been far better to have sat in the street all night than to have walked into such a trap.

But of course it had all been planned. The driver, doubtless, was in the employ of Arnot, and the broken trace had been only a ruse. She grew very much excited as she thought this all out, and a feeling of bitter anger and resentment took possession of her usually gentle heart.

She arose and paced her room back and forth, while she planned what she would do to make Mrs. Rochester and her unprincipled daughter feel the weight of her righteous indignation, if she could but get out of that horrible place.

"I will not bear it," she cried, "they shall be made to suffer for such wickedness. I will go to True and tell him everything, even at the risk of being spurned by him. Their treachery shall all be revealed, and then if he persists in marrying her he will do it with his eyes open. Oh, if I could but get word to Harriet, to let her know where I am, she would get me out, or she could tell the mother at the convent, and she would have me released."

She grew calmer after a while, for she was hopeful, and believed that she would find some means of commu-

nication with Harriet, and, feeling really hungry, she finally sat down and ate heartily of the breakfast that had been brought to her.

She had scarcely finished when the sound of the key turning in the lock warned her that she was about to have another visitor.

She sincerely hoped that it would prove to be Monsieur Arnot, and she was not disappointed, for as the door swung back she saw his genial and benignant face beaming upon her.

"Ah, Sister Angela, good morning. How do you find yourself after your long drive last evening? Pretty comfortable, I hope, although I was afraid you were hardly strong enough for such a ride," he glibly remarked.

"I am well, thank you, monsieur," Salome answered with grave dignity; "but I wish to know why I am detained here against my will?"

"Ah, Sister Angela, do not ask me disagreeable questions," the man pleasantly responded; "but pray accept circumstances as you find them, and make yourself as comfortable as possible."

"But I shall question you," Salome resolutely returned. "I wish you to explain why I am made a prisoner here, and by whose authority."

"Well, then, you are a patient in this institution, because you are somewhat out of health and need judicious treatment, and by the authority of madam, your mother," Dr. Arnot replied, seeing that he might as well explain the situation first as last.

"What is my malady supposed to be?" Salome demanded.

She was greeted by the national shrug and a significant lifting of the eyebrows.

"Mademoiselle has recently been ill," he asserted inquiringly.

"Yes; but I am well now, only I am not quite strong."

"Ah! exactly; and madam, your mother, has the desire that you shall gain your strength."

"By madam I suppose you refer to Mrs. Rochester, the

woman who came here yesterday to consult with you about me?"

"*Oui*, mademoiselle."

Salome smiled. She had at least confirmed her suspicions regarding Mrs. Rochester's visit to Paris.

"Well, then, the woman is not my mother—I have none; both my parents are dead; she is not even a relative—my mother was a cousin of her husband," Salome stated with a directness that carried conviction with it.

Again that characteristic shrug. It made but very little difference to Dr. Arnot whether Mrs. Rochester was the girl's mother or not, provided she promptly paid him the large amounts agreed upon.

"How long am I to be kept a prisoner here?" Salome next inquired.

"'A prisoner!' Mademoiselle makes use of hard words," the man returned with a dissenting gesture. "She is simply my patient—my guest, to be kindly and faithfully cared for until madam returns from the South."

"By the South you doubtless mean Italy?"

"*Oui*, mademoiselle."

Salome was in despair, for she knew that the Rochesters and Winthrops were going to Rome for the winter as soon as madam and Evelyn should return from the baths where they had gone to recuperate, before her illness, and thus she would be obliged to remain for months an inmate of a mad-house.

What would Harriet think had become of her? She would be nearly crazy over her unaccountable disappearance. What would the mother and sisters at the convent think?

Perhaps—and she was appalled by the thought—Mrs. Rochester intended to keep her there indefinitely—forever! She had reason enough to be afraid of her, and so had perhaps taken this way of ridding herself permanently of so dangerous a foe.

The thought made her desperate, and she arose and resolutely confronted her companion.

"Monsieur Arnot," she said with stern dignity, "I assure you, that woman is not my mother—she is no kin

to me; she is only my bitter enemy, while she has wronged me as few women would dare to wrong another. She fears me, for I hold a secret regarding her, that if exposed, would be her ruin, and so she has plotted this additional wrong against me, to secure herself. I know, and you know, that I have no disease, either of the body or brain; I am as sane as you are, and you are committing a heartless crime by detaining me here. I command you to set me at liberty."

The man regarded her with something of wonder as she ceased speaking.

Her tone and manner convinced him that she was speaking the truth, and he was, for the moment, uneasy lest he should get himself into trouble by lending himself to the plot of a scheming woman.

He knew that the penalty was very severe for such an offence; but Dr. Arnot was exceedingly avaricious. Madame Rochester had already paid him a handsome sum in advance—besides, he already anticipated the monthly payments which she had promised to send him regularly, and he had not the strength to resist this important addition to his income.

So he only smiled soothingly upon poor Salome and her authoritative demand to be released, and, adopting a conciliatory tone, remarked:

"Ah, poor child! poor child! pray do not get excited —all will be well by and by. Do not wrong madam, who will doubtless come herself to release mademoiselle upon her return."

"She will not," Salome retorted in deep distress, the conviction growing stronger upon her. "I tell you she fears me, and I believe she intends to keep me here indefinitely."

She made a grave mistake, however, in asserting this, for Dr. Arnot's eyes began to gleam greedily; if she was to be a permanent patient, so much the better for his pockets.

"I am my own mistress," Salome continued. "I am twenty-three years of age, and no one has any right to exercise control over me or deprive me of my liberty. Will you let me go, Dr. Arnot?"

"No, mademoiselle—I have given my word to madam—I must keep it. You may claim that you are of age, which doubtless is true, but—people who are—ah!—invalids are not always competent to care for themselves," he pointedly concluded.

"Monsieur Arnot," Salome broke forth, a sudden thought striking her, "I am rich—I have a large fortune at my command. Do you know that if I should manage, by any stratagem, to escape from your insane asylum—that I could prosecute you—that you would have to suffer to the extent of the law for detaining me here? And I would do it—I would not spare you, I assure you. There are plenty of people in Paris who could prove that I am perfectly sane—there are even persons here who knew me before I came abroad from America, and I would spend thousands of francs to bring you to justice."

The doctor looked somewhat disturbed for a moment after this spirited threat, but his brow soon cleared, and he smiled placidly.

"Madam alone is responsible," he said. "I have her signature to the certificate resigning mademoiselle to my charge, and she would have to prosecute her own mother."

"Must I tell you again that she is not my mother?" cried Salome, flushing hotly. Then she added more calmly:

"You say you have Mrs. Rochester's signature to the certificate consigning me here, but has the document also the signature of some responsible physician, testifying to my insanity?"

Dr. Arnot moved restlessly in his chair at this pertinent question; evidently it was not an agreeable one.

"Mademoiselle is very curious," he evasively remarked with a frown.

Salome began to realize that no entreaty or threat would avail, and then it occurred to her that possibly bribery might succeed where all other arguments would fail.

"Mrs. Rochester has agreed to pay you well, I presume, for detaining me here?" she remarked.

"Patients are not usually treated free of charge in a retreat like this," he returned.

"Would you mind telling me the amount you are to receive?" Salome asked.

Dr. Arnot sneered audibly at this question.

"So that mademoiselle may have another point against me in law?" he retorted with a sarcastic laugh.

"No, monsieur, I was not thinking of that," she quietly replied; "but I imagined that I might perhaps outbid my enemy. I have told you that I am rich. See here! I have a letter of credit for five thousand dollars —twenty-five thousand francs of your money," and she drew forth the envelope containing it. "I will give you four thousand of it, or twenty thousand francs, if you will unbar your doors and let me go free this hour."

Dr. Arnot glanced hungrily at the envelope, while he appeared surprised at her statement; for, in spite of her previous assertion that she was rich, he had not believed that she could personally control any amount worth mentioning. He was strongly tempted, however, by the sum which she now offered him.

But there were a good many things to be thought of in connection with it.

Madame Rochester might pay him a visit before leaving for Italy, and demand to see his patient. If he could not produce her, she could easily make trouble for him; she would demand the money she had already paid him; she might complain of him to the authorities, and thus cause an investigation of the way he conducted his institution, which would ruin his reputation, and even so large a sum as twenty thousand francs would not compensate him for that.

Still, if he could have accepted Salome's offer without any danger to himself, it is safe to say that he would have done so on the spot.

He was thoughtful for several moments afterward, while she watched him with breathless eagerness.

"Twenty thousand francs is a large sum, mademoiselle," he at length remarked, a greedy light in his eyes; "but even if I should accept your offer, how can I be assured that it really belongs to you?"

Salome's lips curled scornfully; she saw that the man

was such a knave himself he had no faith in any one else.

"You shall yourself accompany me to the bank while I draw the money, and where I have already been several times to provide myself with funds. The cashier and clerks there know me and will identify me."

This sounded reasonable, and the man was half tempted again to yield, for he wanted the money badly.

Perhaps after Madame Rochester had left Paris he might venture to accept her offer; but at present it would not do to run the risk of discovery.

"I am bound to madam," he finally said in a musing tone. "I am afraid—at least I must have time to think; I will consider the matter, and let mademoiselle know my decision later."

With that he bowed politely to her and walked out of the room.

She was greatly disappointed and distressed, and, being still weak and easily unnerved, she burst into bitter weeping.

She knew of course that inquiry would soon be made for her, and she wondered what kind of a story Mrs. Rochester would make up to account for her disappearance from the chateau.

Oh, if she could only get word to some one outside!

But Salome was not of a despondent temperament naturally, and after the first paroxysm of despair had passed she began to consider her situation more calmly and hopefully, and tried to devise some plan by which to outwit her captors.

Her first resolve was to disarm Dr. Arnot, if possible, of any suspicion of her intention—make him think that she had concluded to submit to a fate she could not change, and thus secure more freedom in the hospital.

She knew there were wards in every such institution, where the harmless patients were allowed to mingle with each other, and she meant to obtain permission to go among them. She also knew that visitors were frequently admitted to these wards, and she hoped she would either find some one among them who would befriend her, or

who would at least secretly take a letter to post outside for her.

Having decided upon this course, she immediately wrote a note, telling Harriet something of what had occurred during the last three weeks; that she had been entrapped and was now confined in an insane asylum, of which a physician, calling himself Dr. Arnot, had charge.

She charged her to take instant measures for her release —to go to the mother superior of the convent, tell her the circumstance, when she felt sure she would manage some way to have her set at liberty.

She always carried postage stamps about with her, so she could easily prepare this epistle for the mail.

She had written on some leaves which she had torn from a note-book, but she had no envelopes. She managed to fashion something that answered from more leaves of her book, then addressed the missive, and concealed it about her person, so as to have it in readiness in case she should find any one willing to take it out for her.

Feeling that there was now no longer any necessity for her to go about disguised, she threw aside her awkward bandages, cap, and glasses, and was once more her natural self, save for the loose and unbecoming nun's dress, which of course she was still obliged to wear, as she had no other.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SALOME IS MISSED.

A FEW days passed. Salome was kindly treated in every respect save that of being kept a close prisoner.

She was served by a pretty and good-natured maid; she had every luxury of the season provided to tempt her appetite, and was provided with a variety of entertaining reading, also with materials for fancy work to occupy her time.

But she became terribly tired of her solitary confinement, and irritated at being so hedged about that she could find no way to send out her letter.

She had tried to sound the fidelity of the girl who waited upon her, but found that she was entirely devoted to the interests of her employer, and that it would be worse than useless to attempt to bribe her to assist to escape; so she wisely refrained from exciting suspicions that she was contemplating any such measure, and even feigned a content and cheerfulness in her presence which she was far from feeling.

Dr. Arnot paid her a visit every day, but she always received him with a cool dignity which rather awed and held him at arm's length, in spite of his habitual composure and assurance.

One morning, however, she told him firmly that she could not remain shut up in that one room any longer—that she must have more liberty or her health would suffer.

"But I am afraid of you, mademoiselle," he returned, while he regarded her searchingly and with a peculiar smile. "There is no reason why you should not have more freedom if you will only be reasonable and promise

me that you will not make trouble for me by trying to escape."

Salome smiled scornfully.

"Monsieur Arnot must have a strange distrust of his own power if he imagines that a weak girl can escape through solid brick walls, or between iron bars, or elude the vigilance of his many attendants," she sarcastically returned. "I do not say," she continued, "that I should not avail myself of the opportunity of walking out of this institution if the way were opened for me; but since your precautions are sufficient to restrain your hundreds of other patients, they surely ought to be sufficient for me also. I must at least have the liberty of the ward with your harmless patients, if nothing more."

"Have you no fear of them, mademoiselle?" the physician asked with evident curiosity.

"No; why should I fear them more than they fear each other?"

"But they are mad, and do not know the difference."

"And I am sane, consequently I do know the difference. Thank you, Dr. Arnot, for the admission, unintentional though it may have been," said Salome dryly, while the man flushed, and thought her very quick-witted.

"Well," he returned, after considering a moment, "you shall have the liberty of the ward, if you so desire," and walking to the door, he opened it, and held it for her to pass out.

Salome was not slow to avail herself of this privilege, and walked immediately and fearlessly into the long and lofty room, or hall, into which twenty or more smaller rooms opened, and where there were assembled as many women of various ages and appearances.

The portières, which she had noticed on the night of her arrival, and which had been so cleverly arranged to cut off the end of the hall, had been swept aside, and she could now look down the whole length of the vast room.

It was lighted by immense grated windows at either end, and also by a rotunda in the centre, and was clean, airy, and cheerful.

Salome passed slowly down the ward, her keen glance

taking in every detail of persons and things about her, while she was no less curiously scrutinized by the other occupants of the place, who were quick to recognize the fact that there was a stranger in their midst.

She spoke a kind word here and there, for her sympathies were readily enlisted, gave a smile to others, and it was evident, from the friendly glances which were bestowed upon her by all, that she would soon become a favorite with those harmless but pitiable creatures.

Dr. Arnot watched her, a troubled look on his face.

"I don't like this business—I wish I hadn't put my finger in it," he muttered; "the girl is no more crazy than I am, and I was a fool to lend myself to madam's scheme, though I did need the money sadly. I believe—as soon as I am sure that she has left the country—I'll make terms with the girl on condition that she will promise not to denounce me."

Alas! delays are dangerous, says the old proverb, and Dr. Arnot's doom was sealed when he decided in favor of procrastination.

A fortnight slipped by, and Salome continued to mingle every day with the poor wrecks about her, and though her heart was often sad with hope deferred, she became deeply interested in her strange companions. For some of them she grew to feel a great tenderness, while to them she seemed like a beautiful saint.

If a patient were ill or fractious, the attendant had only to send for Salome, when a few quiet words, a clasp of the hand, a softly breathed hymn, would subdue the unruly spirit, restore harmony, or lull the restless sufferer to sleep.

But during all this time the anxious girl had found no opportunity to send her letter to Harriet. It still lay in the depths of the capacious pocket of her nun's dress.

There was scarcely a day that there was not some visitor in the ward; sometimes there were two or three; but no one had yet appeared in whom she felt that she could have confidence. Besides, they were always accompanied by Dr. Arnot, one of the other physicians, or by some attendant, and Salome felt that she was always closely

watched at such times, consequently she had not dared to address any one. There were times when she was sad and depressed because of hope deferred, but if anything could have consoled her it would have been the fact that she was doing good, while it was not entirely uninteresting to study the different phases of insanity around her.

. . . . . .

Meantime Harriet Winter had become very anxious about her young mistress.

She had received a letter which Salome had inclosed to her in one which she had written to the mother-superior, and in which she had told her when she might look for her return to Paris. So she had given herself no uneasiness until the time had passed and she did not make her appearance or send her any word regarding plans for the future.

Then she began to be troubled, and one morning took a sudden resolve that she would go out to the chateau and ascertain the cause of Salome's detention.

The Rochesters and Winthrops—the latter having returned a few days after Salome's departure, in good health and spirits—were very busy preparing for their departure to Italy, and Harriet found considerable confusion prevailing at the villa.

As it happened, Mrs. Rochester was passing through the great hall just as the servant was admitting her, and instantly realized that she was on the brink of a danger which she had not foreseen.

It will be remembered that when Mrs. Rochester had questioned Salome regarding her relations with the woman, the young girl had evaded her, and she had no suspicions that they had any interests in common. She simply imagined that the woman was grateful for the care which had been bestowed upon her during her illness, and so when Salome had called upon her for help in her extremity, at the chateau, she had cheerfully responded, to prove her gratitude. She did not dream that they lived together, or that the woman felt any special responsibility regarding Salome's safety or well-being, and, since she had not known of the letter received

through the mother-superior, she did not suppose her to know anything of the movements or intentions of Salome; she was, therefore, considerably disturbed when she heard her inquiring in somewhat excited tones for Sister Angela.

She immediately went forward, sent the servant away, and quietly drew Harriet into a small reception-room and shut the door against intruders, while she congratulated herself that she had happened to appear upon the scene just at that opportune moment.

"My good woman, what do you wish?—what can I do for you?" she inquired, assuming a tone of kindly interest.

"I've come to see Miss Sa—Sister Angela," Harriet returned, having almost betrayed her knowledge of Salome's identity, in her excitement.

"Why," exclaimed Mrs. Rochester, affecting great surprise, "did you expect to find Sister Angela here now?"

"Of course I did, marm! Where else should I look for her?" Harriet returned, growing more distressed at the confirmation of the statement made by a servant that the nun was not there. "She came here to nurse," she went on, "but wrote me about three weeks ago that she should come home in about a fortnight. It's three weeks now; so I came to see for myself what kept her. I keep house for her, marm, in a little house just under the convent walls," she concluded, in explanation.

"But," responded Mrs. Rochester, still with an appearance of surprise, "Sister Angela's duties here ceased some four weeks ago. Did she not return to Paris at that time?"

"What!" cried Harriet in a frightened tone, and growing pale; "it's true, then, what the servant told me —she isn't here?"

"No; she left Dr. Winthrop some four weeks ago," Mrs. Rochester answered. "She was taken ill here very suddenly one day—she fainted, and seemed quite worn out; but, as soon as she was able, she insisted upon returning to Paris."

"Good gracious, marm! you can't mean it!" exclaimed the woman wildly; "and she never came home at all!"

"Is it possible?" said Mrs. Rochestef with sympathetic earnestness. "Perhaps, then, she went to the convent."

"No, marm; she has her own house, and she would have come directly to me," said Harriet.

"Then she isn't a nun at all," remarked her companion in a peculiar tone; "for nuns do not keep house by themselves."

"Well, that doesn't matter now," Harriet returned evasively, but looking rather crest-fallen at having betrayed so much. "It does matter, though, where she is now. I must find her right away. When did she go away from here?" she demanded rising, for she was wild to begin her search for the missing girl.

"Let me see," mused Mrs. Rochester; "I believe it was just four weeks ago yesterday, that——"

"Four weeks! interrupted Harriet scornfully. "Why, I had a letter from her three weeks ago, and she said she'd be at home in about a fortnight, as I told you before."

Mrs. Rochester remembered and had been somewhat upset by the intelligence; still she was bound to stick to her text if possible.

"Are you sure the letter was written only three weeks ago?" she inquired, simply to gain time.

"Sure, marm; I ain't likely to make many mistakes about Miss—about Sister Angela," Harriet replied.

"But it certainly was four weeks ago yesterday that she had the attack I spoke of; Dr. Winthrop would himself tell you so, and that she wished to return at once to Paris."

"Well, I'm beat!" Harriet exclaimed in a tremulous voice; "for that letter was certainly written three weeks ago, and it was postmarked from this town."

"Perhaps," Mrs. Rochester suggested, a bright idea occurring to her, "she was taken worse after leaving here, and was obliged to stop over at the inn or somewhere in the village; then, when she was a little better, she may have written you, but, not wishing to alarm you, told you that she would be home in a couple of weeks; then she may have been taken worse again, and—and perhaps is ill somewhere now."

"No—no, marm, that isn't like her at all; if she had been sick, she'd have sent for me to come and take care of her," Harriet returned, tears streaming over her cheeks. "I tell you, marm, it'll be a sad day for me if anything has happened to her."

Her heart was full of anxiety and fear, and she imagined a hundred ills that might have befallen her dear young lady; but she did not once suspect treachery on the part of any one at the chateau, for she could conceive of no motive that would prompt any one to injure her. Salome had never confided anything of her history, and she did not suppose she had ever met either the Rochesters or the Winthrops before she went to nurse them at the villa.

The wily Mrs. Rochester, after suggesting that perhaps Sister Angela had probably succumbed to a sudden and fatal attack of illness, was extremely anxious to get rid of her excitable visitor. She feared that Dr. Winthrop might learn that the devoted and self-sacrificing nun who had nursed him back to life was unaccountably missing. If so, he would certainly spare no efforts to get tidings of her, and, if possible, restore her to the lamenting Harriet.

When Harriet Winter left the chateau, it was with the determination to use every means in her power to find her beloved friend.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HARRIET'S SEARCH FOR SALOME.

HARRIET went slowly down the avenue, after leaving the villa, looking the picture of dejection and misery.

On and on she plodded toward the village, taking no note of distance or her surroundings, until, all at once, a frisky dog, that she had kindly fed with dainty bits from the sick-rooms while she was nursing in the chateau, bounded out of a thicket and rushed forward, fawning upon her.

She was startled, for everything about her had been so silent, so apparently deserted, and, in trying to avoid the antics of the joyful creature, her foot caught in her skirts, she stumbled, and fell upon the ground.

She was not hurt, only frightened and trembling, and just then she heard a low exclamation of surprise, and the next moment a figure sprang toward her and helped her to her feet.

It was Dr. Winthrop, who had been concealed from her view in a rustic arbor beyond the thicket, where he had been reading.

"Madame Winter!" he cried astonished, as he saw who she was. "Are you hurt? I had no idea what Don was up to or I would not have allowed him to rush at you."

"No, I'm only startled and a bit upset," Harriet replied, as she tried to recover her equanimity. "But, oh, Dr. Winthrop, I'm in great trouble."

"Trouble!" he repeated kindly. "Come, then, and sit down while you tell me about it," and he led her to the arbor where he had been sitting.

"Now unburden yourself, my good woman," he went on, with increasing sympathy, as he noted her quivering

lips and tearful eyes, "and let me see if I cannot find some way to help you."

"It is about Sister Angela, sir——" Harriet began.

"Sister Angela!" interrupted Dr. Winthrop, anxiety and interest depicted on his thin face. "What about her? I know that she was taken suddenly ill, and went away from here about a month ago. I trust she did not—die!"

"No one can tell—no one knows; no one has seen her since she left here," Harriet cried.

"No one has seen her since she left here four weeks ago!" Dr. Winthrop exclaimed in great astonishment.

"No."

"Have you been to the convent to inquire for her?"

"No; you see, sir, I can't talk with the sisters. Sister Angela had to tell me in English what they said, and so since she's been away I've stayed mostly by myself, but the mother, as they call her, sent me a letter from her about three weeks ago."

"Three weeks ago! Where was it written from?" Dr. Winthrop asked eagerly. "I thought you said nothing was known of her movements since she left here!"

"So I did, sir. The letter did not tell me much, only that she hoped to come to Paris in about two weeks. It was written from here—at least it was mailed from the village."

"That is very strange!—written three weeks ago, and mailed from the village, and she left the chateau four weeks ago," mused Dr. Winthrop.

He seemed to be absorbed in thought for a few minutes; then he said gravely:

"It is very mysterious! You are sure the sisters at the convent know nothing about her?"

"No, sir; they would have told me if they had heard anything—there is another sister there who speaks a little English."

"Then I fear that something serious has happened to her," Dr. Winthrop continued. "I am afraid that she was attacked with cholera after she left here—that, in her thoughtful care for others, she did not wish to carry the disease back to the convent, and so resolved to keep

it to herself and remain at the village. She could not have been very ill at first, and so, to quiet suspicion, wrote to you and the mother-superior in her usual cheerful strain. Then—I am afraid, Madame Winter, that—that she must have had a relapse, and——"

"Died!" cried Harriet with a shudder. "Oh! that was just the way Mrs. Rochester thought it out, and perhaps it's true," and bowing her head upon her hand the woman rocked her body to and fro in an agony of grief pitiful to behold.

"Do not despair," Dr. Winthrop said, trying to comfort her a little; "we will not give up all hope while there is any doubt as to her fate. We must not spend our time in idle grief—we will bestir ourselves, and do all that we can to solve the mystery. If I were only stronger I would start out at once upon the search. But do you go, my good woman, to the village yonder, and ascertain if any one answering Sister Angela's description has been ill there. If you can learn nothing there, return to the convent, tell them what you have been told here to-day, and ask the sisters' help in looking up the case.

"It is now three o'clock," he continued, glancing at his watch. "A train leaves here for Paris at six, and that will give you ample time to find out if Sister Angela has been ill at the village; then you can return to the city in season to interview the mother-superior and the sisters at the convent. Now hasten, and be sure to let me know by the morning post what success you have. I would go with you, but this exciting news has so unnerved me I have not the strength; but if I do not get a favorable report from you to-morrow, I will come at once to Paris, in spite of everything, and see what I can do."

Harriet rose as he concluded, and bidding him a brief good-day hastened away, somewhat relieved and comforted, to have her burden so heartily shared by another.

Of course, she heard nothing at the village, although she was most persistent and diligent in her inquiries.

No one had seen a gray sister there, no one had been ill at the inn since the plague began to subside; surely

no one had died there, or it would have been known throughout the place, and the curé notified.

So, with a little comfort instilled into her heart by these positive assurances, Harriet went back to Paris, and to the convent of the gray nuns, to consult with the mother-superior.

Her anxiety and perplexity were in no wise relieved upon reaching the convent, for neither the mother nor sisters could give her the slightest information, or suggest any solution to the mystery.

Poor Harriet passed a sad and harrowing night. She could not close her eyes, neither could she rest. She composed herself sufficiently, however, to write to Dr. Winthrop, and went out to post the letter as soon as the day dawned.

But the young physician had been scarcely less anxious than Salome's faithful attendant. So all night long he, too, had been wakeful, restless, and anxious over Sister Angela's strange disappearance.

When morning broke he had worked himself into such a state of excitement that he could endure it no longer, though he concealed it so well that no one suspected the trouble upon his mind.

At the breakfast-table Dr. Winthrop announced his intention of taking a drive, as the day was fine, and he thought the air and exercise would do him good.

No one opposed him in this, and as soon as the meal was over he ordered his carriage, and, without inviting any one to accompany him, drove away.

He had determined to go to Paris, to try and ascertain for himself what had become of Sister Angela.

Harriet was greatly surprised when, in answer to a ring of the bell, she went to the door and found him standing there.

She knew that he could not have received her letter, and for a moment a thrill of joy shot through her heart. But his first words blasted the little hope she had felt.

"Did you find her?" he demanded almost curtly, and without waiting for any exchange of formalities.

"No," replied the woman, with a sad shake of her

head; "and I'm almost sure that something dreadful has happened to her."

"Do not be discouraged," he said more cheerfully than he felt; "we must find her, or at least gain some tidings of her, if we go systematically to work."

And he did go systematically to work at once. He sent his carriage back to the chateau with a message to his mother, telling her that he should remain in Paris for the present, as important business there demanded his attention. Then he sought the prefect of police, and related Salome's story to him, telling him to spare no expense in searching for her, and keep him notified of any information which might be gained from day to day.

More than this, he employed a couple of private detectives, hoping to gain some clew in this way.

Madame Winthrop was greatly astonished when her son's carriage returned to the chateau, and his man brought her the message which he had sent.

"Why! we leave for Rome the day after to-morrow! What can he mean?" she exclaimed in dismay.

Norman knew nothing of his brother's plans or the business which detained him in Paris, and, with her curiosity excited to the highest pitch, and piqued besides because it was evident that he had no intention of accompanying the party to Rome, she immediately followed him to Paris where she had a somewhat exciting interview.

"I cannot understand you, Truman," she told him in her most dignified manner, "running away in this incomprehensible manner, just as we are leaving for Rome. What will Sadie think of you?"

"Really, mother," Dr. Winthrop gravely replied, "I was not aware that I had been guilty of anything so very rude, and as for what Miss Rochester may think that cannot affect me in any way."

"How can you say that, my son? You should have more regard for her feelings. Mrs. Rochester is very much hurt, for she thinks you are not using Sadie fairly at all."

"Why so?" the young man demanded, surprised.

"She thinks, under the circumstances, that you are exceedingly indifferent to her."

"Under what circumstances?"

"Why, when a man is pledged to marry a woman it is expected that he will show her some attention."

"It cannot be possible that you or Mrs. Rochester believe I am pledged to Sadie Rochester!" said Dr. Winthrop, looking exceedingly annoyed.

"Any one would believe that we had a right to think so, after a certain interview which occurred here in Paris, and your subsequent attentions to the young lady. Really, Truman, you had no right to compromise Sadie if you had no intention of marrying her," Madame Winthrop concluded.

"I have never had any intention of compromising Miss Rochester," Dr. Winthrop thoughtfully responded; and yet, out of the loyalty and delicacy of his noble soul, he could not bring himself to explain even to his mother how the girl had forgotten and betrayed herself, thus compromising him, rather than he her.

"Truman, you ought to marry her. I have set my heart upon your marrying her. Will you?" and the woman turned a pleading face up to him.

"Mother!" he cried out sharply, "do not talk to me of marriage. I do not wish to marry any one. I have no heart to bestow upon any woman. It died—it was burned to ashes with my Salome," and a shiver of agony ran over him, leaving him deathly white, as he thought of his beloved whom he believed had met a tragic fate in New York.

"But surely you will marry some time, Truman—you will not live single all your life—promise me that you will not. I could not bear the thought of you, with all your talents, isolating yourself, and leaving no one to perpetuate your name. Oh, why cannot you be sensible and marry Sadie?—you have led her to believe that you care for her."

Madam was very much in earnest, and she plainly betrayed it.

Dr. Winthrop frowned and compressed his white lips

to keep himself from giving expression to a bitter retort. He could not forget, if his mother did, that but for her he might even now have been happy in the love and possession of a beautiful wife.

"Why will you harp upon that subject?" he said in a low, restrained tone.

"Because I do not want you to waste your life; because I want you to have what rightly belongs to you—the Hamilton fortune," she responded passionately; then she added vehemently: "Promise me one thing, before I go, and I will try to be satisfied—promise me, if you ever marry again, that Sadie Rochester shall be your wife."

He smiled bitterly.

"Well, mother," he said at last, to end the matter, "if it will ease your mind, I will promise you that much—if I ever do take to myself a wife, Sadie Rochester shall occupy that position—that is, if she should desire it. But I beg—nay, I insist, that you never broach the subject to me again. I prefer to act independently in all such matters."

Madame Winthrop's face lighted.

She felt that he had fairly committed himself at last, and she believed it would be comparatively easy for Sadie to win him now.

"You will come with us to Rome?" she said eagerly.

"No; I cannot. I have work to do here in Paris yet."

"What work? Surely you do not intend to resume your work in the hospitals—there can be no need of that now," madam remarked with a clouded brow.

"I am going to make a study of certain diseases, for a while, preparatory to my return to the United States."

"And will you not come to Rome at all while we are there?"

"Perhaps, by and by; I cannot tell," was the evasive reply.

Madam had to content herself with that, for she saw that it would not do to press the matter further, and she

returned to the chateau, where she reported the concession which her son had made, to Mrs. Rochester.

"How long does his majesty expect I am going to wait for him to make up his royal mind whether he will condescend to take me or not?" Miss Rochester scornfully remarked with a toss of her handsome head, when this was repeated to her.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MISS ROCHESTER A VICTOR.

DR. WINTHROP was greatly disturbed by his mother's visit and the charge which she had brought against him in connection with Sadie Rochester.

"The girl must know that she alone was to blame for the unlucky *contrétemps* which occurred that morning," he said impatiently, as he paced his room back and forth. "Why couldn't she have explained the matter to her mother, and thus exonerated me from all blame? Perhaps she is ashamed to confess that she so betrayed herself. Such a confession, I admit, would be awkward for her; yet, in justice to me, she should have made it."

At last he sat down before his writing-desk, muttering resolutely:

"I will at least give her the privilege of rejecting me, and that will settle the matter for all time. I am bored to death with this continual harping upon the subject of my marriage with the girl."

He wrote rapidly for a few moments, after which he signed his name with a reckless dash, and then proceeded to read over what he had written. The letter ran thus:

"MISS ROCHESTER:—I am considerably troubled over an interview that I have just had with my mother, and during which she stated that you feel yourself somewhat compromised by what occurred between us on the day of your leaving Paris. I sincerely regret if anything which I may have said or done should have surprised you into the betrayal of feelings which you would have preferred to conceal. I imagined that it would be a very easy matter for you to explain the situation to Mrs. Rochester; but if, under the circumstances, you feel delicate about

so doing, and she is still laboring under a misapprehension of the real nature of the interview, I will make you the only reparation in my power by the offer of my hand. I will tell you frankly that I have no heart to give any woman—that the image of my dead wife still fills it to the exclusion of all other affection, and I feel that it is but a mockery to ask any one to marry me. Still if, by so doing, I can set you right in the eyes of others, I am at your service; the proposal will at least give you the opportunity of rejecting one who has, perhaps, placed you in a false position, although unintentionally.

"Very truly yours,

"TRUMAN H. WINTHROP."

"There! I believe this will end that matter for all time," the young man said as he slipped the missive into its envelope and addressed it. "She can tell them all that I have proposed to her and she has rejected me, then they will surely let us both alone about this hateful marriage."

He never once imagined that the girl was as eager for it as her mother and Madame Winthrop—that she was only waiting for the slightest concession on his part to trap him into an engagement, and thus secure the prize for which she had so long angled.

Therefore it was with no little amazement and consternation that he received, late the next afternoon, the following reply to his proposal:

"DEAR DR. WINTHROP:—You can perhaps imagine what the feelings of a sensitive woman may have been upon receiving such a note as you wrote to me yesterday. It was not a pleasant thing to learn that your mother had told you that I felt compromised by the event which occurred, whatever my feelings may have been. But since she has told you and since you have dealt so candidly with me, I will be no less frank with you.

"That I did betray feelings which almost any woman would have regretted revealing I cannot deny, and, strange though it may seem to you, my mother is the last

person in the world who would regard such a betrayal with any leniency. Hence my hesitation to explain matters to her. Having once procrastinated, I have not since had the courage to broach the subject, so she has naturally inferred what Madame Winthrop intimated to you.

"You are very good to wish to set me right, though you say that you have no heart to give me—that you feel it is but mockery for you to make me the proposal you have. I do not so regard it, and I deeply sympathize with you in your great loss—in your blighted hopes, and honor you for your faithfulness to one who was so dear. But, Dr. Winthrop, a man in your position needs a pleasant home and a devoted wife, and I believe both those results would be obtained if I should accept your proposal; and more than that, a wrong would be righted—the Rochester-Hamilton fortunes, which should never have been willed otherwise upon such arbitrary conditions, would be secured to the proper heirs. Do not deem me unmaidenly, I pray, if I confess that my feelings toward you are of such a nature that I am not only willing, but glad, to devote my life to you—that I am even sanguine enough to hope that I shall yet make the future hold something of content, if not of positive happiness for you. Believing this, and knowing also that my own hopes have no higher aim than to make myself useful in contributing to your future comfort and interest, even though I may never win your love, I gratefully accept the offer of your hand, and pledge myself to be a faithful and helpful wife to you.

"Yours now and ever,

"SARAH ROCHESTER."

A groan of misery burst from Dr. Winthrop's white lips as he finished reading this cunningly constructed epistle.

"Has the girl no sense of shame—no discernment?" he cried fiercely. "Could she not understand that my letter was but a mere form— a simple pretext to give her a chance to set herself right with my mother and her own? Could she not see that I shrank from all thought of mar-

riage, with any woman, with a feeling of absolute loathing? Great Heaven! She has pledged herself to me—she has made the affair a formal engagement, and I am bound to her in spite of myself!"

Oh, if he could have foreseen what the result of his letter would have been, his hand would have withered before writing it!

Still he believed that she really loved him; she had betrayed it involuntarily—as he imagined—that morning when he had gone to tell her of the danger of remaining in Paris; she had confessed it again in her letter to-day. Her life, then, would be ruined if she did not marry him. She would lose her fortune through no fault of her own, and her mother would also forfeit the independent control of the income of fifty thousand dollars.

He realized that Miss Rochester was beautiful; that she would shine in society, and be an ornament in any man's home, and having been allowed to see only the best side of her nature, he did not once imagine her to be the hypocrite that she was.

Why, then, since his own life was so hopelessly ruined, should he not gracefully submit to the inevitable, and sacrifice himself to the wishes and good of others?

He had hardly arrived at this almost despairing conclusion, after several hours of rebellion against his doom, when his brother suddenly dashed into his presence, without even the formality of knocking for admittance, his brow gloomy, his face white from passion and pain.

Dr. Winthrop regarded him with surprise and anxiety.

"What is it, Norman?" he inquired. "Is there anything the matter at the chateau?"

"No, everybody is well, if that is what you mean," was the curt reply, as the young man recklessly threw himself into a chair.

"But, Norman, it does not seem to be well with you—what has occurred to disturb you thus?"

"I have simply come to have an understanding with you before we leave for Italy."

"An understanding?" repeated Dr. Winthrop. "Pray what is there that needs explanation between you and me?"

"This—is it true that you are going to marry Sadie Rochester?" demanded Norman Winthrop, starting to his feet and facing his brother, while a dull red wave of passion flushed his brow. "Is it true that you are formally betrothed to her? My mother has told me so, and I have also heard it from another source."

Dr. Winthrop searched his brother's face; he noticed his sullen, desperate air; the reckless tone in his voice, the look of pain on his face, which was now pale even to ghastliness, and he instantly surmised the meaning of it.

His brother loved the girl who had but just pledged herself to marry him.

"You have heard it from another source—from whom?" he inquired.

"From that heartless flirt herself—Sadie Rochester," was the fierce reply.

"Has Miss Rochester told you that she is betrothed to me?" Dr. Winthrop gravely asked, thinking that the girl had been in rather unseemly haste to announce the engagement, since he had but just learned her decision himself.

"Yes, she says she is pledged to marry you."

"Pledged to marry me! Does she appear at all averse to the bond?"

"No—no!" responded Norman passionately; "and that is what cuts me so, for you are so indifferent; you do not act at all like a man who has been so fortunate as to win a beautiful woman like Sadie Rochester, and I want to know whether you are voluntarily betrothed to her, or whether you simply feel bound to comply with the conditions of that contract."

The young physician was deeply distressed by this new development, for he saw that his brother was desperately in love, and it seemed hard indeed if another life must be ruined by his own enforced engagement.

"I am sorry, Norman, that this matter is a source of unhappiness to you," he said earnestly, "but I suppose it is settled that I am to marry Miss Rochester."

Norman Winthrop began excitedly pacing the floor.

"Heavens! you drive me mad!" he cried passionately.

"You suppose it is settled that you are to marry her! Do you love the girl?"

And he stopped short in his walk, and glared fiercely at his companion with flaming eyes.

"Pray do not get so excited, Norman," Dr. Winthrop wearily returned. "Sit down and let us talk this matter over calmly. You ask me if I love Sadie Rochester. You must know that after the experiences which I have been through during the last two years, it would not be easy for me to love any woman with the absorbing passion of a first attachment. I have not even pretended to any such affection; but Miss Rochester is not disagreeable to me; she evidently desires the union, while you well know that my mother's heart is set upon it. Therefore, since much depends upon the fulfilment of this contract, I feel that it is perhaps my duty to yield to the wishes of others, and—well," with a long drawn sigh, as if further explanation would not better matters, "that is about all there is concerning it."

"And, I suppose you were going to remark, since your life has been ruined by the loss of the woman you loved, it cannot matter much if you sacrifice yourself to gain these fortunes, without regard to the feelings of any one else," sneered Norman Winthrop, with exceeding bitterness. "Yes," he went on, with increasing excitement, "you have read me aright; this matter is a source of unhappiness—of despair to me. I love Sadie Rochester as you never thought of loving any one; she has become the one woman in the world to me, and if I must lose her I do not care how quickly I go to the devil. Be quiet!" he continued savagely, as Dr. Winthrop attempted to speak; "I must let it all out—I'll not give up all my hopes without a struggle. I know that I have always been the black sheep of the family, that I've been wild and fast, and have cared but little for anything save my own pleasure; but I love this girl so well that she could do anything she chose with me; she could mould me to her will like a lump of wax—I would be a man for her sake, working hard for fortune, honor, and a name, if I could but win her for my wife; but without her I am

lost, and the hardest of all is that I believe I could win her if it were not for this cursed money."

Dr. Winthrop flushed.

It was not pleasant to be told that a woman was going to marry him simply for the fortune she would thus secure, even if he did not love her as well as he should. Still he believed that his brother was blinded by his own feelings. He was quite sure that Miss Rochester loved him —for she had told him so—had she not tried to impress the fact upon him in many ways?—and he honestly believed that he should wreck her happiness if he did not make her his wife. At all events, he had offered himself to her, and been accepted, and there was no honorable way of retreating from the position.

"Well, Norman," he said sadly, for he was grieved to see how reckless his brother had become under the influence of this passion, "I cannot tell you how shocked I am by what you have told me regarding your feelings toward Miss Rochester. If I thought that she loved you in return, and would be happier as your wife, I would willingly release her from her pledge to me; for, believe me, the money is, comparatively, of little consequence to me. Indeed I would most cheerfully transfer my right to it to you, if that would answer the same purpose, and the requirements of the will, and make you both happy."

"Would you?" eagerly demanded the young man, brightening visibly. "Then prove it—renounce it and Sadie at the same time, and I swear that I will leave all my past life behind me and become a good man I am simply desperate, True—I am pleading for life, home, happiness; you have no idea how much is involved, for I idolize this girl; she will either be my salvation or prove my ruin. True, will you give me my bride and save my soul?"

Dr. Winthrop arose and grasped his brother's hand. He was deeply moved by this appeal, and for a moment he could not speak, while a thrill of joy agitated every fibre of his being at the prospect of his own escape from this hated marriage.

"Yes," he said at length, "at least I will give you a

chance, if you think there is one for you. Miss Rochester knows that I do not love her as a man ought to love his wife; and I am willing to tell her that I would prefer to forfeit the fortune rather than marry her if she entertains anything of affection for you. I will submit the matter for her decision, but you must make up your mind to abide by it, for I cannot honorably retreat from the engagement if she sees fit to hold me to it. Believe me, Norman, I would gladly give you both fortune and bride if I could, but since I cannot, your fate must hinge upon Miss Rochester's fiat."

"Then I am lost," cried Norman Winthrop, reeling where he stood, "for if you submit the question to her, she will choose to be your wife and not mine. Break the engagement yourself, and, with no hope before her of winning these fortunes, she will be driven to me."

"I cannot do that, Norman. I see no honorable way in which I can withdraw from my engagement to her, and I am surprised at you. I cannot understand how you would be willing to marry a woman who was driven to you, as you express it, by being thrust from another," Dr. Winthrop concluded with some scorn, even though he deeply sympathized with his brother.

"You do not know what it is to love as I love," he cried hoarsely—"and you will not break with her?"

"I must not."

"Then it doesn't matter how quick I go to——"

The last word was almost inarticulate, as he turned and rushed from the room, slamming the door violently behind him.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DR. WINTHROP HAS AN INTERVIEW WITH MISS ROCHESTER.

THE next morning Dr. Winthrop was an early visitor at the chateau. He was resolved to put his own and his brother's fate to the test. Upon reaching the villa, he sent a servant directly to Miss Rochester, asking if she would oblige him with a private interview.

She soon came, looking more beautiful than he had ever seen her, in a spotless dress of exquisitely embroidered white lawn, with a few brilliant autumn leaves fastened to her corsage, while her cheeks glowed with repressed excitement, and her eyes shone like stars.

"I was almost afraid we should not see you again," she remarked, as she came forward and greeted him cordially, "for your mother said you had important business which would detain you in Paris."

"I did not intend to return when I went away," he replied, and she could see that he spoke with an effort, "but after what occurred yesterday, I felt that I owed it to you to come."

"I am very glad," she returned, blushing delightedly and bestowing a shy glance upon him.

"I felt that I owed it to you to explain even more fully than I have already done, by letter, the state of my feelings regarding the past, and the prospects of the future," he resumed gravely, while his companion paled somewhat, and wondered if he was going to "back out" after all.

"You know the story of my marriage," he continued; "but I fear that you do not count the cost of linking your bright young life to one who has only a dead heart to offer you. You have done me the honor to tell me that you will be my wife, in spite of all this; but I have thought it best to talk with you face to face, that you may be sure

you are making no mistake. My brother came to me last evening in a perfect frenzy of despair over the knowledge of your acceptance of my proposal. He loves you with the one passion of his life; he came to me pleading that I would release you from your pledge to me; he said he was pleading for life, home, happiness, that his love would either be his salvation or his ruin, and I believed him—it would have been impossible not to believe him. I told him, Miss Rochester, that I would submit the matter to you—that I would tell you that the Rochester-Hamilton fortune was nothing to me compared with his happiness and yours; that I would far rather forfeit my share of it than marry you if you loved him and would give him your hand. It seems to me as if we are all involved in the most unfortunate complication of circumstances which only perfect frankness and truthfulness can set right. I pray that you will be true to the dictates of your own heart. If you have any affection for my brother —and I gleaned from what he told me that he believes you have—if you could be happy with him, I assure you that I will do all in my power to make your future as bright as possible, as far as worldly prospects are concerned, and though we may lose the fortunes that were so strangely bequeathed, we shall at least have been true to ourselves, and you will win the best and brightest crown of a woman's life—the love of a devoted husband. I have spoken at length, and very plainly, and now I await your verdict. What will you say to me?" he questioned, as he turned his earnest face, his eager eyes upon her.

She sat perfectly motionless for a few moments after he concluded, but he could see that her face, though averted, was crimson, while she trembled visibly.

Then all at once she lifted her face haughtily and met his glance with a defiant look.

"Yes, what shall I say to you?" she cried, in quivering tones. "I wonder that I do not tell you to go and never let me look at your face again; that I do not tell you that I care nothing for that wretched contract—that I hate it, scorn it and you; that I would almost rather die than

marry a man who can so coldly tell me that his heart is dead and he has no love to bestow upon me with his hand —who, more than that, can plead so eloquently the cause of another and deprecate his own success. But, oh, Truman Winthrop, I will not—I will not! I shall be your wife in spite of it all! You do not know what I sacrifice in telling you this," she went on vehemently, and throwing out her hand toward him with a passionate gesture; "how my pride suffers, how my love suffers, how I am violating all the strongest feelings of my nature; but I cannot help it. I have given myself to you and I will not retract; but—I will make you love me yet—you shall yet own to me that your heart is not dead, and that Sadie Rochester is the one love of your life."

She burst into a passion of tears at this point, and, as if able to bear no more, abruptly arose and fled from the room, leaving Dr. Winthrop in no enviable frame of mind.

Her passionate denunciation had made him feel as if he had done her a double wrong in stating his own feelings so plainly and in pleading his brother's cause. But he could not have done otherwise under the circumstances. Truman Winthrop was true to his heart's core, and he could not allow her to marry him without trying to make her realize the risk she ran of ruining her own life by so doing.

Still he felt uncomfortable over having wounded her so deeply; her words, "you do not know what my pride suffers—you do not know what my love suffers," smote him keenly, and he firmly believed that she could have no affection whatever for his brother.

How could he know that what she sacrificed in keeping her pledge to him was the one love of her life—Norman Winthrop? How could he know that her pride suffered in that, having vowed to be his wife, she could not repudiate him and tell him that she scorned and despised him—that she would never marry him but for the wealth and position which she would win as his wife?

She had wrought herself into a veritable tempest of passion, and her last threat that she would win his love had been an idle one; for she cared little for his affection,

in comparison with the fortunes for which she was scheming.

But the die was cast—he had gained nothing by his visit or by pleading for Norman.

He was very sad, for he felt that he was standing in the way of his brother's interest and happiness and even his moral welfare.

On the other hand, if Sadie Rochester loved him, as he was now firmly convinced, it was hard for her to know that her affection could never be returned; but he felt that he could do nothing more; he could only leave it to a higher power to work out and regulate.

Since Dr. Winthrop could at present do nothing more than he had already done to discover Sister Angela, and as his friends were to leave for Italy in a few days, he thought it best to remain at the chateau and assist them in their arrangements for their departure. So, a little while after Miss Rochester's flight from his presence, he sought his mother.

She greeted him with undisguised delight.

"At last, my dear boy," she exclaimed as she kissed him—"at last I have gained the one wish of my heart! And now I believe that your future will be all that I could desire."

Dr. Winthrop's lips curled in a bitter smile.

If his future, with his sad and blighted heart and broken hopes, was all that she could desire for him, how shallow was her nature—how little of real mother love she must have for him!

. . . . . .

When Miss Rochester fled in such a passion from Dr. Winthrop's presence, she did not slacken her pace until she reached her mother's parlor, where she sank upon a chair, and gave way to a paroxysm of mingled grief, anger, and mortification, which, however, was not unmixed with something of almost hysterical exultation.

"What is the matter with you?" her mother demanded, as she regarded her, in bewildered surprise, for it was a rare occurrence for her proud-spirited, self-reliant daughter to break down like this.

The only reply to this question was a burst of nervous and immoderate laughter, and this sudden change from tears to mirth really alarmed Mrs. Rochester.

"Gracious, Sadie! I honestly believe you have hysterics. I never saw you in such a state before. Here, take my vinaigrette, and try to calm yourself."

Miss Rochester obediently inhaled several breaths of the aromatic preparation her mother extended to her, and gradually regained composure.

"Well, mamma," she at length remarked, "I've just had a hand-to-hand battle with my future husband."

"Sarah!" exclaimed the elder woman, aghast.

"Oh, but I have come off victor in the encounter," said Miss Rochester, with a smile of triumph. "I've simply given him a taste of my claws, and I do not imagine he will care to have the experience repeated very often. Do not fear, mamma," she continued, as she saw the look of anxiety on her mother's brow; "it is a settled thing that I am to be Mrs. Truman Winthrop. I knew that I should win."

"Do not be too sure; for you would never dare to take any decided step until you receive those papers from New York," was the troubled reply.

Miss Rochester laughed out mockingly.

"Dr. True does not appear to be in any great hurry to have his chains irrevocably riveted," she said with some bitterness, "but as far as that divorce is considered there will be no trouble about that, for you know the letter I received from Converse the day before yesterday, spoke very encouragingly—he the same as promised that I should have the papers within three months; that letter which I made Salome sign did the business. How provoking it was that she turned up as she did, to make all this trouble," she concluded with a frown.

"Well, but tell me about your interview with Dr. Winthrop," said Mrs. Rochester curiously.

The young lady complied, and gave her a faithful account of all that had passed between herself and her reluctant suitor.

"Flattering, wasn't it?" she said sarcastically, in con-

clusion, "to be told that my promised husband loved another woman to distraction, while he tried to beg off by pleading the cause of somebody else. If I had not vowed that I would be mistress of Brookside and Englehurst at any cost, I believe I would have given him a curt dismissal."

"Don't do anything rash," pleaded Mrs. Rochester earnestly, "you will be lucky to get him under any circumstances, if you can be sure of the divorce; it would be dreadful to run any risk of—bigamy."

"Nonsense, mamma. Converse knows what he is about. I have given him a true statement of affairs, and as he assures me that it will be all right, it surely will be. And, mamma, we must never let Salome out of that place, for if she and Dr. Winthrop should ever meet, even after I have bagged my game, she could make no end of trouble for me."

"I intend that she shall never do any harm," Mrs. Rochester significantly returned. Then she asked, "Will Dr. Winthrop go with us to Italy?"

"No—I hope not," the girl retorted, a flush suddenly suffusing her face; for although she meant to marry him in spite of everything, she hoped to be able to still carry on a secret flirtation with his brother—her stolen love-dream was too sweet to be relinquished just yet.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE WINTHROPS AND ROCHESTERS LEAVE FOR ROME.

LATE that evening Miss Rochester was passing through a dimly lighted corridor, when she was suddenly confronted by a tall figure, who seized her hand in a vise-like grip.

It was Norman Winthrop, and his face was so distorted with pain and passion that the girl started back affrighted.

"Norman!" she gasped, and struggled to release her hand.

He gave vent to a bitter laugh.

"Don't be afraid—I shall not harm you, though if I look as I feel I must appear devilish," he said. "It is a hard word, Sadie," he added, as she winced, "but no other will express the state of mind I am in at present. So it is settled beyond recall that you are to marry my brother?" he concluded inquiringly, while he searched her face despairingly.

"Yes," she briefly answered, trying to speak coldly, even haughtily.

"And you are totally indifferent to the wreck that you have made of me!" the young man vehemently cried, "for I tell you, Sadie Rochester, if I lose you, I am a wreck—a ruined man."

Her lip quivered, in spite of the effort which she made to retain her self-possession; but she replied in the same tone as before:

"I do not consider that I am responsible——"

"You are responsible," he retorted hotly, "for you have made me love you; you have led me on, little by little, until my very life and sanity depend upon your smiles and your love. You have even confessed that you love me, and by that very confession you belong to me, rather

than to my brother. You shall not marry him," he concluded fiercely. "I swear, Sadie, that you shall never be his wife."

"Really, Mr. Winthrop, are you not arrogating to yourself an authority which you have no right to exercise?" the girl sarcastically demanded. "I believe that a woman of my age has the right to choose for herself in a matter of this kind."

"You have no right to choose Truman Winthrop for your husband when your heart belongs to me," he returned through his tightly locked teeth.

She knew herself that she had not—that she had no right to become another man's wife, loving him with all the passion of her nature as she did. She grew very pale as she thought of the long, unloved future before her, and for a moment she could not answer him.

But the die was cast; her ambition was stronger than her love. She longed for wealth and position, and she could not turn her back upon the brilliant prospects before her and marry simply for sentiment. Norman Winthrop was comparatively a poor man, and all her life poverty had been the one thing that she dreaded most, and so, right or wrong, she was determined to marry Truman Winthrop.

"Do you forget how much depends upon this marriage?" she asked in a low tone; "do you forget that I not only deprive myself of great wealth, but your brother also of his rightful inheritance? Besides, I have pledged myself."

"How very considerate!" sneered the wretched man. "Do you imagine that True is so anxious to possess this fortune that he would insist upon marrying a loveless bride, especially when the ruin of his only brother hangs in the balance? O Sadie," he went on, changing his tone to one of tender pleading, "for mercy's sake—for love's sake, do not violate your own conscience and every principle of right. Break this unnatural engagement and give yourself to me. I will work for you; if money and position are what you want, you shall have them. I will win them for you; my whole life shall be devoted to your

happiness. Oh, my love—my love, I cannot give you up! Do not persist in ruining both your life and mine!"

The girl felt that she could not bear much more; her lover's suffering and despair unnerved her, and she was trembling so that she could scarcely stand.

But she could not relinquish the hopes and aspirations of long years, especially after all the desperate measures which she had adopted to attain them, not even for the love which she craved with all the strength of her nature; not even to save this man, who was the dearest object which the world held for her.

"It cannot be; it is useless to discuss the matter further," she responded, and turned abruptly away to leave him.

But he seized her hand again and threw himself before her.

"You are utterly without heart or feeling, but you shall never be my brother's wife!" he cried in a tone that smote her with a sudden fear.

Then he flung her hand violently from him, and turning, rushed quickly from her sight.

Two days later the Winthrops and Rochesters started for Italy.

Dr. Winthrop continued to resist his mother's pleadings that he would accompany them. She had fondly hoped that since he had yielded his will and agreed to marry Sadie, he might consent to act as their escort in company with his brother.

She and Mrs. Rochester had had visions of a brilliant wedding in Rome, where they were to spend the winter together with many other Americans whom they knew, for they imagined that it would give considerable *éclat* to the event if they could have the union solemnized there; more than that, they were anxious to have the marriage consummated as soon as possible lest something should occur to prevent it altogether.

"I do not believe in long engagements, Truman," madam said to him on the morning of their departure; "promise me that you will not delay your marriage, that

you will take your wife home with you when you return to America."

Dr. Winthrop's face grew stern. It annoyed him exceedingly to have the subject continually harped upon, and yet he well knew they would never let him alone until he yielded to their importunities.

Well, if he must marry Sadie Rochester, it did not much matter when, he told himself, and so, with a feeling of desperation at his heart, and to quiet madam, he said:

"Well, mother, I will think of it."

Madam's face grew radiant.

"Now you are sensible," she said; "when will you join us?"

"I cannot tell yet—you will be travelling for a month yet, and I shall not be able to leave Paris at present, perhaps not under a couple of months," he returned, putting off the evil day as long as possible.

"Well, then I shall look for you in Rome two months from now, shall I?" she asked, determined to make him commit himself to something.

"Ye-s—perhaps. I will, however, write you before that, of my plans."

"And, Truman, why won't you be married in Rome? it would be such a fitting place."

"Mother," he interrupted, with more impatience than she had known him to betray for years, "why will you not leave me alone? you drive me desperate. Oh, do what you please—settle everything as you choose, only don't keep constantly harping upon the subject," and with this he abruptly left her presence, but his white pained face haunted her long afterward.

He accompanied the party to Paris, where he made every provision for their comfort on their journey, and then bade them farewell; but there was not one whit more of warmth in his adieus to his *fiancée* than to any other member of the party; indeed, there was far more of love and sympathy in the silent hand-clasp which he gave his brother.

He was greatly relieved when they were gone and he was free to go back to his study and his practice, into

which he threw himself with all the earnestness he could arouse, to drown his misery and keep him from thinking of the dreaded fate awaiting him.

Madame Winthrop and Mrs. Rochester, on the other hand, were highly elated as they went southward.

Madam had communicated the good news of her son's concession to her friend and they proceeded to hold him to his promise by at once laying their plans for a brilliant wedding in Rome.

Mrs. Rochester was troubled at times with fears that the divorce papers might not arrive in season; but as the weeks passed and they did not—though the lawyer wrote that he should soon have them—she tried to comfort herself by reasoning that it would not matter much if they did not, since no one could ever suspect that Salome was living, while she was so securely shut away in that madhouse in Paris.

Before she had married Mr. Rochester she had been a poor woman toiling for her daily bread as a clerk in the post-office department in Washington. She was handsome, and attractive and Mr. Rochester had fallen in love with her, asked her to become his wife, and promised to settle fifty thousand dollars upon her. He did not do this, however, but kept putting it off, on one pretext or another, until his death, when, to her excessive rage, she found that he had only added a codicil to his will, leaving the money to her conditionally.

She had been the mistress of Mr. Rochester's elegant home, and had command of a liberal income for more than ten years, and the thought that she might some day be deprived of the luxuries which she had so long enjoyed, filled her with consternation. Not being over-scrupulous as to ways and means, she determined to stop at nothing to carry out the conditions of the will, and secure to herself an independent fortune.

Now, everything seemed to indicate that all her hopes would be realized, and she lent herself to all Madame Winthrop's plans with the greatest heartiness.

They agreed that nothing should be said about the engagement in Rome, until Dr. Winthrop should arrive,

and then they would hasten the wedding with all possible dispatch.

Meantime, Miss Rochester's trousseau should be ordered from Worth's, and everything arranged to make the affair as brilliant as the wealth and position of the parties seemed to demand.

Strange to relate, however, now that the matter was settled, Miss Rochester herself suddenly became very averse to any reference to it. She grew moody and depressed, was exceedingly impatient and irritable, and often, Mrs. Rochester, coming upon her unawares, would find her in tears for which she would give no explanation.

Norman Winthrop was also very unlike himself. Heretofore, he had always been a delightful escort in travelling, always attending faithfully to the comfort of his party, and keeping them happy and jolly with his never-failing spirits. But now he was a mere automaton, without one particle of that cheerfulness and good-fellowship which had hitherto characterized him. He rarely spoke unless he was addressed, except to attend to necessary business, and although his mother tried her best to ascertain the cause of this change in him, he baffled all her efforts, and kept his own secret.

When in the presence of others he was always courteous to Miss Rochester, and showed her all the attention that etiquette demanded, but if by any chance they were left alone, he never addressed her, nor took the slightest notice of her.

They journeyed very leisurely, taking in all points of interest along their route, and finally reaching Rome, about the middle of November, took a suite of apartments in the Via Nazionale, where they settled themselves comfortably, and even luxuriously, for the winter.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

SISTER ANGELA AGAIN.

DURING all this time Dr. Winthrop was very busy. He was making a special study of diseases of the eye, ear, and brain, besides attending to some regular duties in one of the hospitals.

He courted labor, study, excitement—anything, in fact that would help him to drown his own troubles, and keep him from thinking of the past.

Meantime, Salome was trying to bear with what patience and fortitude she could, her cruel incarceration and the sad sights which daily came under her observation, while she strove to do what she was able to mitigate the wretched condition of many of her companions.

One wet, dreary afternoon, when thick clouds obscured the sky and a cold rain beat sharply against the windows of the ward, which was unusually dark and gloomy, Salome gathered the restless inmates of the room beneath the rotunda, and tried to cheer and enliven them by relating an interesting story.

Her heart had been unusually heavy all day, she was very sad from hope long deferred, and she felt that she must do something to effectually distract her thoughts from herself and her hard lot.

It proved to be an effectual, though temporary remedy for she soon became so absorbed in her employment, and in watching its effect upon various members of her daft audience, that she did not hear the door as it opened near one end of the long ward to admit a couple of visitors.

Monsieur Arnot was with them, and they appeared to be distinguished people—people toward whom he exhibited considerable deference.

They came slowly down the room together, and all three were earnestly discussing some interesting questions.

Salome's back was toward them, and she was not aware of their presence, and kept on with her story, although some of her listeners rose and moved down the room toward the strangers. This often happened, however, for she could not always hold the interest of every one, and so she paid no heed to them.

They gathered around the visitors, regarding them curiously, and Dr. Arnot called the attention of his guests to one or two peculiar cases, and then some slight movement—or was it a familiar tone that was wafted toward her?—made Salome turn and look behind her.

That one glance was like a galvanic battery to her.

She sprang from her chair, with a low cry of mingled joy and terror; then she suddenly buried her face in her hands, as if to hide it from observation; for, as we know, since she had been in the asylum, she had discarded all her head-gear, also her unsightly spectacles, which had so completely disguised her, believing that in that place she was in no danger of having her identity discovered.

For one moment she stood like a statue thus, then she turned her back again upon the strangers, and glided with drooping head and a hopeless air into the remotest corner of the vast room where she remained motionless, scarcely appearing to breathe, and, as if looking from the window.

The attendant, who was in the habit of watching Salome closely, had observed her strange deportment, so different from her usual nervous, eager interest when there were strangers present, and wondered at it. Hitherto, she had been one of the first to come forward and watch with a keen eye and intense interest every movement of visitors. Now, all at once, she appeared terrified and anxious to shun observation, while her colorless, averted face and despairing attitude, plainly indicated that something had occurred to alarm her, which might develop her peculiar phase of insanity.

He was standing near Dr. Arnot and his guests as he observed this.

"How very strange!" he remarked in an earnest tone.

One of the gentlemen turned to him as he said this; then his glance followed his and caught sight of that motionless figure by the window.

"To what do you refer?" he asked with some curiosity.

"To that girl yonder; it's a peculiar case, very," the attendant replied. "She belongs to a fine family, is lovely, cultivated, and remarkably amiable, but strangely enough, she imagines herself to be a nun—one of the gray nuns——"

"One of the gray nuns!" exclaimed his companion, his glance again seeking the slender, drooping figure—he had not noticed her dress when he looked before.

"Oui, monsieur. It is a great trial to her friends, for she insisted upon adopting their dress, and was continually doing the strangest things in that character; but she is perfectly harmless, very gentle, very lovable, and beautiful as an angel. Would monsieur like to come nearer to get a better view of her?"

The stranger nodded, and the two men moved down the room together, and ere long the sound of their footsteps fell distinctly upon Salome's ear.

She began to tremble violently now. There was no way of escape for her. If she turned to flee, she must confront them; but what could she do? a few steps more and they would be beside her.

A shiver ran over her slight frame, then once more she dropped her face upon her hands, effectually concealing it from view, and stood thus, awaiting what would come next.

They saw how excited she had become and they stopped, feeling that it would be unwise to go nearer to increase her agitation.

But something about the drooping figure seemed suddenly to impress the stranger—some thought, some memory, made him turn eagerly to the attendant.

"What does she call herself—what name has she been known by in this character?" he questioned.

The quick, sharp, almost authoritative tone surprised the attendant, and caused him to observe his companion more closely.

He was very pale, there was a startled look in his eye, his lips were compressed, his manner excited.

"Sister Angela, monsieur——"

"Sister Angela!" repeated the man in an eager, joyous tone, and he took a quick step forward, as if he would have sprung to the girl's side.

Then he evidently checked himself, as if it had occurred to him that he must do nothing to alarm or agitate the girl.

"Stay!" he said. "I must speak with Dr. Arnot at once," and turning, he retraced his steps, with a swift resolute tread, to the superintendent's side.

Salome, almost overcome with many conflicting emotions, had heard his question, also the attendant's reply, and then Dr. Winthrop's eager, joyous repetition of her name; for the stranger was he.

It told her that he knew of her mysterious disappearance, that he had been anxious about her, and was now delighted to have found her.

His glad tones made her heart beat tumultuously, and so increased her trembling that it seemed as if she must sink to the floor.

Should she turn and claim her freedom?

It seemed her only chance, and yet she hesitated.

Ah! if she had but had her usual head-gear, her friendly cap, with its broad black frill, to conceal her face; if she had even had her colored spectacles to hide her eyes, she would not have lost a moment. As Sister Angela she would have thrown herself upon his protection, told how she had been entrapped, and beg him to save her.

But as Salome Howland, she could not turn and face the man from whom she had fled, believing him disloyal to her, and that he had thrust her from his home—the man whom she believed she had so recently seen clasping her bitterest enemy to his heart, and in whose ear she had heard him murmuring words of fondest love.

Ah! she could not regain her liberty, even though this might be her only opportunity to escape from that horrible place, at the cost of having her identity discovered. She could not bear to see the look of astonishment, of horror,

and blighted hope, which she thought must sweep over his face, when he should learn that she was alive, and that, if his marriage with her had been legal, Sarah Rochester could never be his wife, at least, until the former tie was annulled.

These thoughts flashed through her brain in that one brief moment, succeeding the announcement of her supposed name, and the agony that she suffered may be imagined.

She did not hear him say that he must speak with Dr. Arnot, for he had turned as he spoke, and she only became conscious that he had gone and left her to her fate, as she heard his retreating footsteps, and her heart seemed suddenly rent in twain.

He had been told that she was Sister Angela; he knew that she was the nurse to whom he owed so much, and even though he believed her to be insane, he might, at least, have come to her side, taken her hand, and spoken a word of kindness and friendly sympathy; common gratitude and humanity should have prompted as much as that after all that she had done and risked for him and his.

She half turned and darted a furtive glance behind her.

Dr. Winthrop was talking rapidly and earnestly with Monsieur Arnot—appeared to be asking some favor of him.

Then he paused, and Salome saw Dr. Arnot shake his head decidedly as he replied, while with a nervousness that was wholly foreign to him, he seemed all at once to be anxious to hurry his visitors from the ward.

"Oh, it is my only chance—my only hope!" Salome said to herself, as she saw them all turn and move toward the door; "but I cannot—I cannot meet him; it would kill me to have him recognize me and then turn coldly from me—hating me because I still live to mar his hopes for the future."

Ah, the agony of that moment! Her brain seemed on fire; her heart beat so heavily in her bosom that a sense of suffocation made her gasp and pant for breath; all the strength seemed to forsake her limbs, and a cold perspiration gathered on her brow.

Now the visitors have reached the door. Dr. Arnot

opens it and stands back to allow them to pass through, his face pale and anxious. One has crossed the threshold —the other is on the point of doing so; another moment, and he will be gone, and Salome believes that then she shall really go mad—that reason will surely forsake its throne.

With a low cry of despair she falls upon her knees and stretches out her hands toward the man whom she loves with a deathless love, the agony of a breaking heart stamped on her colorless face, and gleaming from her wild eyes.

At that instant, the figure in the doorway—which she sees but dimly now, for the blur that has come over her sight—turns for one last look down the long ward, a gleam of tenderest pity in his eyes for the gentle sister toward whom his heart goes out in profoundest gratitude, but who, he has been assured, is now hopelessly insane, and too easily excited to be allowed to hold any communication with any one whom she has previously known.

That look seems to paralyze him. He catches sight of that kneeling form, with its despairing face, its outstretched hands, that seem imploring him not to go, but to save her from a fate worse than death; and for one brief moment he is spell-bound—rooted to the spot.

The next, a hoarse, wild cry echoes through that great room, startling all its inmates, sending a thrill of wonder through the watchful attendant's heart—a shock of fear and dismay through Dr. Arnot's; then there is a quick, agile bound back into the room—a rush of swift footsteps, and like the sound of distant heavenly music, mingling with the roar of a cataract, Salome catches the startled words:

"Great Heaven! Salome! my wife!"

Then she is faintly conscious of being lifted and laid upon the broad breast of the man she so fondly loves; of being convulsively clasped to a wildly beating heart; of seeing a face full of love and tenderness bending over her, while agonized tones beseech her to look at him—to speak to him; then the vision goes suddenly out in a deadly calm and great darkness.

CHAPTER XL.

TELLS HOW DR. WINTHROP FOUND HIS WIFE.

YES, Truman Winthrop had found his wife at last! But the discovery came to him with such a shock that it nearly unhinged his own reason for the moment, and it almost seemed to him as if the whole world had suddenly gone mad.

But how did it happen that he came a visitor to Dr. Arnot's establishment?

It has been stated that he was making a special study of diseases of the eye, ear, and brain, and in pursuit of points relating to the latter subject, he had arranged with a friend and fellow-student to visit several retreats for the insane in Paris, for the purpose of observing the different methods of treatment.

They had already been over three other institutions in the city, and Dr. Arnot's establishment was to be the last.

That gentleman had received them most graciously. It caused him no little pride that learned men came to him and his asylum for information regarding the treatment of diseases of the brain, and he always made them very welcome.

"They did him great honor," he would affirm, with many bows and smiles, but with an inward feeling that it was quite the reverse.

Upon this occasion, he remarked that he would show them about in person; but he little imagined what the hour would reveal.

Neither had Dr. Winthrop the slightest suspicion that there was any one in the institution that he had ever seen before. He was intent only upon learning something new—upon studying different phases of insanity and their treatment.

He had therefore been greatly shocked when his attention was attracted to that figure in the nun's dress, and the attendant had told him that Sister Angela had become an inmate of that great tomb for the dead in life; to learn that the faithful nurse to whom he owed so much, had lost her mind, with no hope of its ever being restored.

He could not understand it either, since the mother-superior and the sisters at the convent appeared to be ignorant of her condition or whereabouts. Still, it was possible, he thought, that they did know, but were unwilling to have her condition known; it might even be that they had sent her there to be secretly cared for.

His first impulse, as we know, had been to rush to her side—to greet her kindly, and say something pleasant to her.

Then it suddenly occurred to him how unwise such a proceeding would be and though it required great effort to control his feelings, he turned back to seek Dr. Arnot's advice and counsel, telling him that he knew the girl, and asking his permission to speak with her.

But the physician, who was greatly startled by the information, decidedly refused to allow him to hold any conversation with her.

He volubly expressed both surprise and sympathy, upon being told how faithfully and bravely she had worked during the prevalence of the plague which had lately passed over Paris—how she had even saved Dr. Winthrop's own life; still he insisted that it would be very unwise to arouse memories of the past, and finally said that he could not permit him to address her.

"Mademoiselle was exceedingly violent when she was brought here, monsieur," he remarked with deep anxiety, lest something should occur to deprive him of his profitable patient. "The sight of a familiar face might cause all her former madness to return. She is quiet and docile just now, and much as I may desire to oblige monsieur, my judgment warns me to refuse his request. Messieurs," with a polite bow, which included both gentlemen, "shall we now pass on to another ward?"

Dr. Winthrop, though saddened and disappointed

by this adverse decision, could only acquiesce in its apparent wisdom, and so turned to follow his friend from the room.

But as he was about to cross the threshold, he could not refrain from bestowing one regretful backward glance upon the unfortunate who had spent so much of her time and strength for the good of others.

He turned just in the doorway, and then a great shock, which seemed almost like a convulsion, passed over him as he caught sight of that kneeling figure, as he saw and recognized the beautiful, despairing face that was turned toward him, and beheld those hands outstretched so appealingly.

Was he dreaming? was he the victim of some wonderful optical illusion? or had that violent shock been the rending of his soul from his body, sending him in an instant into the eternal world to be met thus by this vision of his lost wife?

No, no! it was no dream, no illusion! It was the real face of his idolized wife—the one face in all the world that he had ever loved with all the passion of his nature, and, though he could not understand it—though it seemed absurdly impossible, he yet instinctively knew that those delicate features, those wondrous eyes, those sweet, quivering lips, and that wealth of beautiful hair belonged to Salome alone.

With a mighty effort he broke the spell that held him paralyzed, and unheeding Dr. Arnot's polite, though somewhat impatient, efforts to hurry him away, he leaped suddenly back into the room, and in an instant that loved form lay upon his breast, and he knew, beyond a doubt, that his wife was not dead, but living, and all his own once more.

A bitter curse burst from Dr. Arnot's lips as he witnessed this astonishing scene, and realized that a formidable investigation was a probable result.

With a brow as black as night he hastened down the ward after his flying visitor, and overtook him just as she lost consciousness in his arms.

"Monsieur," he tried to say calmly, "the girl has only

fainted, and, although your sympathy and agility have saved her fall and does you great credit, she will be better left with the attendant. Pray lay her upon the couch yonder, where she will receive every necessary attention."

He had not heard the young physician's passionate exclamation as he caught his wife in his arms, and was therefore still ignorant of the true meaning of the scene.

"Lay her upon a couch in this room and leave her with an attendant!" Dr. Winthrop cried, as he turned almost fiercely upon Dr. Arnot. "Never, sir! for she is my wife! My God! that I should find her here!"

"Your wife, monsieur!" and the man recoiled as if he had been struck a blow. "Mon Dieu, monsieur must have been stricken with insanity himself!" and he anxiously searched the young husband's face.

He was as pale as Salome herself—his lips twitched from intense emotion, and the veins stood out like whipcords upon his forehead, while he hugged that unconscious form to his heart like some miser who had suddenly recovered his long-lost treasure.

"Yes, my wife!" he replied. "Oh, my love! my love! what brought you into this den?" Then he added sternly, as he turned to Monsieur Arnot.

"She is no more insane than you are; show me at once to some private room where I can give her the care she needs."

Dr. Arnot stood regarding him suspiciously and trying to decide what course to pursue in this unexpected emergency.

Dr. Winthrop saw that he doubted him.

"I swear that this woman is my wife," he said, "and if you do not wish to bring serious trouble upon yourself, you will do as I request, instantly."

His fellow-student now came to his side and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"What is the meaning of this, Winthrop?" he gravely inquired.

"Just what I have said. I have found my wife, whom for almost two years, I have believed to be dead. How she ever happened to be in Paris, and in this place is more than I can understand. There is some terrible mystery about it; but if you doubt my word, look here!"

He supported Salome with one arm while he thrust his other hand within his bosom and drew forth a small case which he passed to his friend.

"Look at the face painted there, then at the one upon my breast, and doubt my word if you can," he said, with quivering lips.

The man opened the case and at once recognized Salome's lovely face, which Dr. Winthrop had had copied upon ivory from a photograph after he had believed her to be dead, and had carried about with him ever since.

It had needed but a glance at the still, white features resting upon Dr. Winthrop's bosom to assure him that he spoke the truth, and then he quietly passed the picture to Dr. Arnot.

Dr. Arnot grew very pale as he, too, saw the perfect likeness to his patient; then he turned and without a word led the way to the room which Salome had occupied ever since she had been an inmate of the institution.

Dr. Winthrop laid his precious burden upon the bed, and began at once to restore her to consciousness.

The fainting turn proved an obstinate one, but it finally yielded to his judicious treatment. Salome began to show signs of returning life, and then the young husband banished every one from the room, feeling that he could bear no eye to witness their reunion when she could fully come to herself.

Never was music sweeter to mortal ears than when she heaved a long sigh, that was yet more of a sob than a sigh, and in a voice full of agony, cried out:

"True, True! oh, my husband, save me!"

That had been the prayer of her heart when she saw him leaving the ward and believed that she was looking her last upon him forever, and dooming herself to perpetual imprisonment in that horrible place; now she involuntarily gave utterance to it.

Dr. Winthrop gathered her two cold white hands in his and hugged them to his breast, as he bent fondly over her.

"My love, you are safe for all time—nothing shall ever separate us—nothing shall ever harm you again while I live."

Salome lifted her eyes wonderingly to his face.

Instinctively she trusted him, and yet she could not understand it—the situation, his fond looks, and loving words.

She believed that the last time she had seen him, he was holding Sarah Rochester in his arms, and pouring words of passionate love into her ears. She believed that he was betrothed to her—that he hoped and expected to marry her.

But surely unmistakable love for her now beamed in his eyes; his voice was full of tremulous tenderness, and her confidence in him was for the moment restored.

A faint smile broke over her face, two crystal drops gathered in her eyes and rolled slowly over her cheeks.

Her husband wiped them away with his own handkerchief, and stooping, kissed her softly on the lips.

Then he lifted her head upon his arm with all the gentleness of a woman, and made her drink from a glass something he had prepared for her.

"I am so tired," she said, nestling more closely to his breast, like a weary child that has at last found a place of refuge and safety.

The act almost unmanned him, for it told him how thoroughly she had become exhausted by the mental strain of the last few weeks; how all the burden of care and anxiety had suddenly dropped from her, now that she found herself safe with him, and she simply wanted to rest in his protection.

"I know it, my darling," he murmured fondly, "I know that you must be worn out with sorrow and fear; but it is all over now. Will you try to sleep a little while I go to make arrangements with Dr. Arnot for your removal?" and he laid her gently back upon the bed.

She caught his hand, a look of fear leaping to her eyes.

"Do not leave me," she whispered nervously.

"No, I will not, if you object," he returned reassuringly, "but, dear, I want to take you away from this place immediately and I thought that if I could arrange for it while you had a little nap, it would facilitate matters. I will not go away from your door—I will step outside

and send an attendant to ask Dr. Arnot to come to me. Are you willing—will you trust me and try to sleep?"

"Yes," she said, instantly releasing his hand while she turned her head upon her pillow and closed her eyes.

Dr. Winthrop went softly out of the room, but did not move from the door.

He beckoned to an attendant, and sent him with a message to Dr. Arnot requesting his presence.

That gentleman did not keep him waiting long, but he looked pale and anxious, and remarked as he approached the young physician, that his friend was waiting below for him.

"I cannot go yet," Dr. Winthrop replied, and taking a card from his case, he wrote a few lines upon it, and then asked that it be sent down to the gentleman.

Dr. Arnot complied with his request, after which Dr. Winthrop drew him to a seat just outside Salome's door, and requested him to explain how his wife had come to be an inmate of his establishment.

The wily physician's brain had been busy ever since the discovery of Salome, and he had a cunningly constructed tale all ready for the young man's ear.

He represented that a lady, calling herself Madame Rochester, had come to him a few weeks before in great distress because one of her daughters had exhibited marked symptoms of insanity. She was on the eve of departing for Rome, where she was to spend the winter—she could not take a crazy girl with her, and she wished to leave her in his care until her return.

Her story was so straight and credible—it was so evident from her description of the girl's condition that she could not be in her right mind, that he had not a suspicion but that everything was as she represented, and so he had consented to receive mademoiselle into his institution, and do what he could for her recovery, during the absence of her friends. She had already improved greatly, he remarked, in conclusion, for when she was brought there, she had been very violent, while of late she had seemed quite docile and more rational, and he had great hopes of her entire recovery.

CHAPTER XLI.

"MY WIFE, HAVE YOU CEASED TO LOVE ME?"

DR. WINTHROP'S lip curled as he listened to Dr. Arnot's artful story, for he knew well enough that he had colored it to suit himself, and throw all the blame elsewhere.

"She was no more insane than you were," he said sternly, "and you know it—you must have been conscious of the fact the moment you met her, or else you are a fraud, and have no business to pose as a specialist in diseases of the brain. 'Violent,' was she when she first came here? Of course, what person with a particle of spirit, would not have been violent upon discovering how she had been trapped into an institution of this kind? No doubt she was very indignant, and demanded to be immediately released, perhaps threatening you with the law, as she had a right to do. There has been some vile plot against her, and since Mrs. Rochester has been associated with it she shall be answerable to me for it; and you, Dr. Arnot, shall not escape an investigation for having lent yourself to it."

"Assuredly, I regret," the physician began with paling lips at this threat. "I trust monsieur will be merciful, and not injure an unsullied reputation by any insinuations of foul play——"

"I shall demand an investigation," Dr. Winthrop relentlessly returned. "Such outrages must not be allowed to go unpunished. If Mrs. Rochester is alone to blame, then she alone will suffer—censure must fall where it is deserved."

Dr. Arnot cringed and fawned and pleaded.

His establishment would suffer—his reputation would

be ruined, himself and his family would be beggared, he whined.

"Your establishment ought to suffer; your reputation ought to be ruined if you lend yourself to such dastardly plots as the one I have discovered to-day," Dr. Winthrop retorted with increasing displeasure, for he could not forgive the wickedness that had consigned his darling to a mad-house, even though he could not yet comprehend why it had been done.

Then Dr. Arnot began to bluster and to threaten. He was not at all sure, he affirmed, that mademoiselle was Dr. Winthrop's wife—such a statement may have been a plot on his part to secure her freedom, and he would not allow her to leave the institution without the sanction of madam, her mother; he would call in the officers of the law to protect his interests and sustain his authority; monsieur should be arrested, and much more after the same style, and poured out only as a voluble Frenchman can pour out his wrath.

Dr. Winthrop listened calmly until he became exhausted—from want of breath rather than words—then he replied, with cool self-possession:

"It will be very easy for me to prove that your late patient, or rather prisoner, is my wife, as I happen to have in my possession an important document which cannot be contested. I refer to the certificate of our marriage which I slipped into a pocket of my note-book the day it was given to me, and there it has remained ever since."

He drew forth his note-book as he spoke, found the certificate, and passed it to his companion, who saw at once that it was a legal and properly attested document. He read the name Salome Howland as being the lady who had been united to Dr. Winthrop, and he could not doubt because he had seen the same one written upon the letter of credit which Salome had shown to him, more than once, in her efforts to purchase her liberty.

It was hard to admit himself beaten, however, and he snarled out:

"But I am not sure that they are one and the same individual. I do not believe monsieur."

"That I can easily prove also, for there are several people on this continent who know the lady well, quietly returned her companion, "and it will be well fo. you if you will allow me to take her peaceably from this place. I assure you, sir, you will make serious trouble for yourself if you attempt to detain her. It will be wiser, Dr. Arnot," he concluded meaningly, "for you to assist rather than oppose me in this. And as for Mrs. Winthrop being Mrs. Rochester's daughter, there is no truth in the statement; that was simply told to trick you into the belief that the lady possessed lawful authority over her."

Dr. Arnot could not fail to perceive that the young physician had the best of the argument, and he wisely resolved to make no further objection to the departure of his recent patient.

"What reason can you assign for madam's plot against the lady?" he inquired, with some curiosity.

"The only reason that I can think of," Dr. Winthrop thoughtfully returned, "is this—Mrs. Rochester has a daughter who is a little older than Mrs. Winthrop, and whom for several years both her family and my own have been desirous that I should marry. My wife was supposed to have met a tragic death nearly two years ago; but as we have just discovered, such was not the case. She came to us as Sister Angela, to nurse us through the cholera—as I have already told you. Mrs. Rochester must by some means—— Ah! I see!" he said to himself with a start, as he suddenly remembered how she had fainted in the upper hall. "Mrs. Rochester must have discovered her identity, and so shut her up in this madhouse, to get rid of her, in order that my marriage with her daughter need not be interrupted—though how she could bear to contemplate such a double crime is more than I can understand."

There were some other things which he could not understand—such as how Mrs. Rochester had been able to identify Salome as his wife, and how she had been able to keep all her nefarious doings from other people; but these mysteries he hoped would be explained later.

"*Mon Dieu!* but women are wicked creatures!" hypocritically exclaimed the distinguished brain doctor.

A sarcastic smile curled Dr. Winthrop's lips at the observation, but he made no reply.

He requested Dr. Arnot to send a messenger for a carriage, and then went back to his wife.

But he found Salome strangely silent and shy. She had not slept at all, for the moment Dr. Winthrop left her, a hundred conflicting memories began to torture her.

First, she remembered Madame Winthrop's statement that she was no legal wife. Then it occurred to her that even if she had been at that time, she might be so no longer for had she not signed with her own hands the letter which would empower the lawyer to procure her divorce from Truman Winthrop? Perhaps the necessary papers had already been sent to Miss Rochester, and she had thus, by her own voluntary act, made herself no wife. Then had she not seen and heard enough with her own eyes and ears, to ruin her happiness forever? How could she believe that Truman Winthrop still loved her, was still loyal to her, when he had so earnestly avowed that he loved another woman, and asked her to marry him?

Such thoughts as these nearly drove her wild, and banished sleep from her eyes.

At first when she awoke to consciousness, and saw that loved face bending so fondly over her, it had seemed as if all her troubles were over. Dr. Winthrop had appeared so overjoyed to find her—had spoken such tender words of love, that for the time she had forgotten all else and believed that his heart was all her own once more.

But now—oh! what did it mean? It was all a dreadful puzzle, and all her peace, and trust, and happiness slipped out of her grasp again.

"Did you get any rest, my darling?" Dr. Winthrop inquired, as he approached the bed and found her awake. "Why, Salome! I do not believe you have slept at all," he exclaimed, as he noticed her glittering, restless eyes, her crimson cheeks, and the tense look of pain about her mouth. "What makes you so nervous, dear? I told you I would not leave your door, and I did not. You have

a high fever, too, and your pulse is bounding like a race-horse."

She sat up in bed as he took her hand in his, and when he would have clasped her again in his arms, she avoided him by a dexterous movement, and slipped into a chair.

He looked wounded, but he would not be repulsed.

"My darling!" he cried, as he bent down and folded her to him; "how can I ever express my gratitude for this great boon? How can I ever thank the good God for giving you back to me? Are you not glad, Salome, and did you know, that all this time, I have believed you dead?"

She knew it but too well, and she shivered over the bitter memories which these questions revived, while she gently put his arms away from her, thinking that perhaps she was no wife—she had no right to these fond embraces.

"What is it, my Peace?" he questioned anxiously. "Am I too demonstrative in my excessive gladness? Are you still weak from your recent illness, and does it oppress you? You are very thin, love."

And he lifted one of her burning hands to his lips, glancing at it sadly, as he did so.

"Can we not go away from here?" she pleaded tremulously. "Oh, I want to get away from this horrible place."

He saw that she was quivering in every nerve, and he began to realize that it was his first duty to get her away from all depressing influences and unpleasant associations; so curbing his longing to hear some word of love from her lips, he gently replied:

"Certainly, dear; I do not wonder at your eagerness to leave this vile place. We will go at once. I have already sent for a carriage. Are your wraps here in this room? Ah!"—as she went to the closet and brought forth her ugly nun's bonnet and cloak—"we must get a more becoming garb than this for you. I cannot have my wife going about as a gray nun."

Again she shivered as he pronounced the word wife,

and her hands trembled so that she could scarcely tie her bonnet-strings.

"Nay, my darling, I shall positively forbid that," Dr. Winthrop playfully continued, as she was about to resume the double spectacles which she had worn so long. "I can never have those dear eyes hidden from me again. Ah, to think I never knew you, when for weeks you were so near me! Oh, my love, how much I owe you. A second time you saved my life. Yet why the need of such a disguise? Why have you hidden from me so persistently when I have longed for you with such bitter longing? Why—— But I must wait; there are many things that need to be explained, and we have no time now."

He was deeply hurt that she made no attempt to answer even one of his questions—that she had not once met his glance, but kept her face averted, and even avoided his touch when he would have assisted her in her preparations to go.

Still he attributed it to her weakness, her nervousness, her anxiety to get out of the place where she must have suffered so much; and when she had fastened her gloves he drew her hand within his arm and led her from the room, thinking that when she was rested and refreshed she would be his own Salome once more.

CHAPTER XLII.

EXPLANATIONS.

DR. WINTHROP and Salome found their carriage waiting at the main entrance, but Dr. Arnot was not visible; he had not the courage to take leave of her, whom he had so wronged, and she was glad that she was not compelled to bid him farewell. There was a feeling of infinite relief and thankfulness in the heart of both husband and wife, when they turned a corner and the asylum was hidden from their sight.

"Where do you want to go, Salome; where shall I take you?" Dr. Winthrop asked after a few moments, not knowing just what was best to do.

"Home—to Harriet," she answered.

He was disappointed and wounded, for while he could understand that she would be anxious to relieve Harriet's anxiety upon her account, and he even wished to do so himself, there was something in the way she uttered the woman's name that told him she expected to find comfort and support in her presence—a sense of rest and security which she could not realize in his.

She was leaning back in the carriage with closed eyes and an unmistakable look of pain on her face—she seemed little like a happy woman who had been almost miraculously restored to a fond husband, after nearly two years of separation, he thought, with some bitterness.

The drive was not a long one, and they soon stopped before the modest little house where Salome had made her home since the death of Miss Leonard.

Harriet happened to be sitting by a window when they drove up; it needed but a single glance to tell her who was with Dr. Winthrop, and she sprang to the door to meet them, before the young physician could lift his

precious charge from the carriage, and the next moment the two women were sobbing in each other's arms.

Dr. Winthrop paid and dismissed his cabman, after which he followed his wife into the house, but it was some time before he could reason either of his companions into anything like composure.

Harriet was the first to recover herself, for Salome seemed utterly unnerved. Then she noticed immediately how wretched her young mistress appeared. She had been quick to observe and understand, too, that the relations between the young people were of a far tenderer nature than would naturally be expected to exist between a physician and a nun, no matter how much gratitude the former might imagine he owed for faithful nursing.

She began to realize at once that she was *de trop*, and remarking that it was dinner-time, and they must both be hungry, she slipped from the room and Dr. Winthrop was left alone again with his wife.

He was not sorry. He saw that something was very wrong with Salome—there were many things to be explained and talked over, and he was determined that every barrier should at once be broken down, and perfect confidence in each other restored.

He loved her with his whole soul, and he believed that she had once loved him as well; but he knew that she had been deeply wounded and injured, while his mother and sister had been her guests in New York, and that they were, to some extent, responsible for the misunderstanding that had driven her from his home. Just the truth of it he had never been able to learn; but now he meant to have the whole story—to go to the bottom of all secrets, even at the sacrifice of a little strength on her part, if need be, for he believed she would be the better for it in the end.

A strange silence and constraint seemed to fall over Salome after Harriet left the room. She shrank into a corner of the sofa, without removing any of her things, and sat there with clasped hands and averted face before her husband.

"Salome, dear, are you not going to remove your

bonnet and wrap?" Dr. Winthrop asked, in a kindly tone.

She started violently, and nervously tried to untie the strings of her bonnet; but she only pulled them into a harder knot, which she found it impossible to loosen.

Her husband went to her side and gently disentangled them for her, removing the ugly head covering and casting it upon the floor. Then he unfastened her wrap, and threw it behind her.

Still she had not once lifted her eyes to his face; she was trembling nervously too, and her cheeks were crimson, her bosom heaving with suppressed emotion.

"Salome!"

The darkly fringed lids quivered over the beautiful eyes, but she did not look up or reply.

"Salome!" her husband repeated more tenderly, more gravely too, than before.

There was something in his tone half authoritative, half appealing, which she could not resist, and she lifted her glance to his.

"My wife, have you ceased to love me?"

There was a moment of silence after Dr. Winthrop put that grave earnest question to his wife.

Then all Salome's forced composure forsook her, and throwing out her hands in a wild passionate gesture, she cried:

"No—no—no!" and burst into a perfect tempest of tears.

Had she ceased to love him?

How could he have such a thought when she had braved and sacrificed so much for his sake?

Dr. Winthrop gathered those trembling hands tenderly into his, his face lighting with joy, and then he drew her close to his breast once more.

But he said nothing more just then—he thought it better to allow her to weep all she would and relieve her overburdened heart before questioning her any further.

All the pent-up grief of the past seemed bound to expend itself, and unmindful of everything, she wept and sobbed until the fountain of her tears was dry and she lay

exhausted in her husband's arms, with deep, quivering sighs breaking at intervals from her lips.

Nearly half an hour elapsed, and no word had been spoken; the tender, noble-hearted man was content to sit there, holding the beloved form in his embrace, and patiently bide his time.

At last, however, he thought to renew the subject so near his heart.

"Now, Salome, my wife," he began in a quiet, kindly tone, "begin at the beginning, and tell me all about yourself; the sooner you and I get out of this unnatural state of constraint, and understand each other, the better it will be for us both."

Those two words, "my wife," suddenly brought her to herself, renewing all her doubts and fears, and she shrank away from him again with a gesture of despair.

"Oh!—I am not your wife," she moaned, covering her burning face with her hands.

Ah! that began to throw a little light upon her strange behavior, and Dr. Winthrop's mind reverted to what his mother had said about the illegality of their marriage, because Salome's true surname had been withheld, and was not written upon their certificate. He had wrung enough from madam and Evelyn, on his return to New York, after Salome's supposed death, to make him suspect something of the cruel things they had said to her.

He did not attempt to take her in his arms again, for her gestures had told him that she felt she had no right to his embraces.

"Why do you say that, Salome?" he gravely questioned, "what makes you think you are not my wife?"

"They told me so," she answered wildly. "They said our marriage was illegal."

"My mother and sister, I suppose you mean," he quietly returned. "I know that they argued something of the kind—perhaps they even really believed it; but you should never have trusted to a simple assertion like that. You should have written to ask me the truth; or if you could not trust me, you should have gone to some trustworthy lawyer in New York and obtained a decision."

"I did not think of that," she murmured.

A look of keen pain swept over Dr. Winthrop's face.

"O Salome! how could you believe that I would be guilty of doing you such wrong as to disown you, even though there had been a flaw in our marriage?" he cried sharply.

She lifted her eyes and searched his face wonderingly.

"I never should have believed it, if—if you had not sent me away from your home," she said, with quivering lips.

"I sent you away from my home—your home!" he repeated in astonishment.

"Yes; you sent me that cruel dispatch, telling me to shut up the house on Madison Avenue, and go to the —— Hotel, and remain there until your return."

"'Cruel dispatch!' Why, my darling, I was wild lest you should be poisoned by sewer-gas, and I simply sent you the message to save time. I wrote explaining all by the next steamer."

"Sewer-gas!" Salome repeated, astonished now in turn.

"Yes, my mother wrote to me saying that your health was failing—that sewer-gas had been discovered in the house—that she had begged you to go home with them, and you refused; she said that nothing but a command from me would make you go away. So immediately on receiving this letter, I cabled you to go to the —— Hotel. I mentioned that house, because, knowing you were not strong, I thought you would be more at home than in a large hotel, while I also felt that it might be more agreeable than for you to go to Thirty-fourth Street with my mother and sister. I realized that they were not quite congenial," Dr. Winthrop explained.

"There was no sewer-gas in the house on Madison Avenue," said Salome, looking blank.

"I know it. I examined it thoroughly upon my return," he briefly replied.

"And," she went on, "I thought the cable message was sent in reply to my letter of confession. Madam, your mother, had accused me of many things; she insisted

that I should tell her my whole history; I could not do that, for I had not confided it to you and I felt that you had the first right to my confidence. She told me that my marriage was illegal, because I had withheld my true surname, that I had compromised you and the family, so I resolved to tell you everything, and wrote to you my whole history, begging you to send me but one word, 'stay' by cable, to relieve my suspense as to how you would receive my confession. But your message told me to go, and believing that you were ashamed of one who was a fugitive from home and friends—that you had simply married me from a feeling of gratitude, duty, and pity, and now regretted the union, as they said, I resolved that I would not burden you longer. I——"

"Salome, you break my heart!" Dr. Winthrop interposed, his pale lips quivering in spite of his manhood. "How could you imagine for one moment that, having deliberately won you to be my wife, I would ever send you away from me or take advantage of a legal flaw? If there had been any such thing in connection with our marriage, it would have been my first care to have righted the wrong or mistake. Even if I had married you from a sense of duty, gratitude or pity—which is absolutely false—I hope there is honor enough in me to have enabled me to stand faithfully by the contract and not take such cowardly advantage of a friendless woman."

"Oh!" gasped unhappy Salome, who began to realize how rashly and foolishly she had acted—how, perhaps, after all, she had been her own worst enemy, "I ought to have thought of that; but I did not, there were so many things which seemed to confirm what they told me."

"You spoke of a letter of confession," her husband resumed. "I never received such a letter; it must have miscarried, or else——"

He broke off hastily, but the suspicion which flashed into his mind was very near the truth.

Salome lifted a surprised look to his face.

"You never received it?" she cried; "and you do not know the truth about me even now?"

"No; I know no more to-day, than I did the morning I

bade you farewell in New York, nearly two years ago," he answered. "I have blamed myself many times," he went on regretfully, "because I did not allow you to tell me your history, as you attempted on several occasions; but really, I did not imagine there was anything very important to be told."

"And you have never learned—you have never been told my true name?" she gasped.

"No; I only know you as Salome Howland Winthrop, and still my beloved wife," Dr. Winthrop returned with a fond little smile, which however had much of sadness in it. "You are my wife, dear," he added, as he saw the hot flush that mounted to her brow; "it makes no difference that you did not give your true surname. I married you in good faith and before witnesses; I took you to my home and made you mistress there—that of itself would give you a legal claim upon me, and nothing could break the contract but a divorce obtained upon the ground of unfaithfulness, upon my part or yours."

At the word divorce Salome threw out her hands with a low cry of horror and pain.

Oh! she surely deserved the very worst that she could suffer as a punishment for her lack of faith in this noble man, whom she loved with her whole soul. What would he think of her when he learned what she had done—when she should tell him that she had applied for a legal separation from him? No doubt he would be so wounded and offended that he would repudiate her and tell her that he would abide by the decision of the court.

"Does the thought of a divorce so pain you?" he said tenderly. "It is an ugly thought, an ugly word, but it never need trouble us; for, love, our hearts are too firmly knit together to ever desire a separation, are they not?"

"Oh, how shall I tell you?—how shall I tell you?" she wailed, breaking down utterly again, and wringing her hands in anguish.

"How shall you tell me what?" he questioned wonderingly.

With a great effort she calmed herself, for she knew that she must tell him the truth.

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"What will you think of me when I tell you that I have petitioned for a divorce?" she moaned with lips that were absolutely colorless.

"Salome!" and he recoiled from her in sudden horror, shocked and wounded to his very heart's core. "How could you? On what grounds?" he sternly demanded after struggling a moment for speech.

She shivered as with an ague chill at his tone, and bowed her head humbly before him.

"On the plea of desertion and repudiation," she said. "I—I believed all that they told me—that you did not love me—that you would be glad to be free. It is only lately that I did it, and for myself I would not have wished it; but they told me that you were to marry Sarah Rochester; they—she and her mother—discovered my identity, and, though they also asserted that our marriage was illegal, they said there might be a possibility that I would have some claim upon you, and they wanted me—or Sarah did—to make assurance doubly sure by applying for a separation—it could be secretly done, and no one save the lawyer and ourselves need ever know anything about it, while, since she was going to marry you, it would be a great burden off her mind. I was dead to you; there was no hope that I could ever be anything to you again, and so—O True, I was desperate, I believed you loved her, I wanted you to be happy, even if I was not, and I did not wish to stand in the way of your interests or desires—so, I signed the letter she wrote——"

"The letter that she, Miss Rochester, wrote?" he demanded in a terrible voice, and beginning to realize all the treachery and wickedness that had been employed to separate them, without regard to his feelings or the ruin of his wife's life and happiness.

"Oh, do not make me tell any more!" Salome cried, as she suddenly recalled that scene in Mrs. Rochester's parlor. "It is better, perhaps, that you should not know——"

"But I shall make you tell more—all—everything. I will know!" he said in a determined tone. "Was it Miss Rochester who made you sign that letter?"

She bowed a mute assent.

"Did—did my mother have anything to do with the matter?"

"No—oh, no."

"Thank Heaven! I should have been humiliated indeed to know that she could have been guilty of such a crime," the young physician ejaculated, as he wiped the perspiration from a face, white to the lips.

She thought he was suffering on account of Miss Rochester's treachery.

"Oh, forgive me—forgive me and do not question me any more," she pleaded. "I have done this thing, and I must bear your scorn and anger as best I can. I have loved you through all—too well, perhaps—I shall love you till I die. I have been rash, foolish; I have allowed my pride, my desperation, to drive me to extremes, when I should have trusted and consulted you. I have found it out, all too late. It is my punishment, and I have no one but myself to blame."

"Hush, Salome," her husband said gently, almost unnerved himself at the sight of her wretchedness and hopelessness, "since you love me, as you say you do, it is all I ask; the past shall go for nothing. I can even overlook the application for a divorce, since I know it was forced from you—that you were tricked into it. You live—you were not a victim of that fearful fire—I have found you, and nothing shall ever separate us again."

"Oh! but if the divorce has been granted—if she should already have received the decree!" Salome cried breathlessly, but looking up with a gleam of hope on her white face.

"Even then it would be a very easy matter for me to make you my wife again. My darling, tell me, if news should come to-day that the separation had been granted, do you still love me well enough to give yourself to me a second time?"

Could she believe her ears? Could he even wish such a thing after all her distrust?

The face bending so eagerly toward her was full of

love and tenderness and earnest appeal, she could no longer doubt him.

She threw herself upon his breast, tears raining from her eyes.

"O True, it is not a question of my love for you," she breathed.

"Then of whose, dear? Certainly not of mine," he responded as he tenderly smoothed the dishevelled tresses, "for the world has been a wretched blank to me without you, during these last two years—while knowing that you live, the future would be no less miserable, if I had to spend it apart from you. I shall never give you up, Salome. Tell me that you believe me—that there is no longer any question in your heart of my love for you."

She could not fail to see that he spoke only truth, and yet how could she reconcile that scene in Mrs. Rochester's parlor at the chateau, with his present protestations?

She lifted her eyes and searched his face.

"There is some doubt yet, love. Tell me what it is. There must be perfect confidence between us. Let us effectually demolish every barrier once for all," he said with deep tenderness.

"Then you do not love——" she began, then stopped, for it seemed so disloyal to doubt him.

"Whom?" he questioned gravely.

"Sarah Rochester."

"Assuredly not."

"But—but——"

"Tell me all, Salome," he commanded, seeing there was something still troubling her.

"But I heard you tell her so over and over again. I saw her clasped in your arms—lying upon your breast, your lips raining kisses upon hers; and O True! True! that was what broke my heart! I could never have signed that letter but for that," Salome panted, and her tale was all told at last.

But Dr. Winthrop regarded her in bewildered astonishment, and was almost tempted to believe that a form of madness had seized her, for her words were utterly in-

comprehensible, and yet her earnestness convinced him that she believed what she had stated.

"What can you mean? When did you imagine that you saw and heard all this?" he inquired.

"When I was ill at the chateau."

"When you were ill at the chateau! I do not understand you," he said more deeply puzzled, for everything seemed to be growing more complicated, though a sudden shock went through him as she spoke of having been ill at the villa.

"Yes—or I had been ill and was getting better and had told Mrs. Rochester one day that I must return to Paris. She replied that she would arrange for me to go the next day. I had only sat up once or twice, but I told myself that if I intended to go away the next day I must begin to exercise and gain a little more strength. I was in Sarah's room, and when I thought no one was about I got up and tried to walk. I steadied myself by the furniture and went into Mrs. Rochester's room—you know how they were situated—when my strength gave out and I had to sit down. Presently I heard voices in the parlor —your voice and hers; you were telling her of your love; you had never addressed me with a tithe of the passion and earnestness that you used with her. You told her that you had loved her from the moment of your first meeting, and you begged her to assure you of her love for you, in spite of that unnatural contract which would have consigned her to a man whether she could love him or not——"

"You need not tell me any more, Salome," Dr. Winthrop interposed, laying his fingers softly upon her quivering lips to stop the miserable recital. "I understand it all now. But would it be too much to ask you to believe—could you credit me if I should tell you that I never uttered the words that you have repeated—that I never held Miss Rochester in my arms or touched her lips with mine?"

Salome drew in a deep breath of astonishment, and lifted a wondering glance to his face.

Nothing but grave and earnest truth was written there, and she began to question within herself whether that scene, which had been so indelibly stamped upon her heart, could have been a vision—a mere chimera of the brain.

"Oh, if I had not seen you!" she cried, a puzzled look in her eyes, an eager longing in her tones.

CHAPTER XLIII.

SALOME RELATES SOMETHING OF HER PREVIOUS HISTORY.

DR. WINTHROP was not hurt by his wife's apparent doubt. He simply folded her closer in his arms and smiled fondly down upon her.

"Can it be possible that, during all the time you were at the chateau, you never saw my brother?" he remarked after a moment.

"No; I never saw him except once or twice in the distance, and then I had but a glimpse, and at dusk, when I was taking the air for a few moments. I supposed it was your brother, for he was with Madame Winthrop and your sister," Salome replied.

"I remember now that he did not come often to my rooms during my illness," said Dr. Winthrop reflectively.

"Doubtless," he thought to himself, "he was improving the time to make love to Miss Rochester."

"You recollect that Mr. Tillinghast would not leave you when you were extremely ill except for needed rest, and we did not think it best to have too many around you; and then, when you began to improve, you are aware that your brother went away with your mother and sister," Salome responded, but not comprehending just why Dr. Winthrop had spoken of this.

He looked into her eyes and smiled.

"It was but natural that you should have been deceived. You think you saw me in Miss Rochester's parlor that day, but you did not; for, during all the time that we were at the chateau, I never once entered those rooms except to prescribe for Miss Rochester when she was ill. The man you saw with her must have been my brother, Norman—my twin brother—who resembles me, whose

voice and face and figure are so like mine that our most intimate friends can scarcely tell us apart."

"Oh, if I had but known!" exclaimed Salome with a look of astonishment, but with a sigh of infinite relief, while her white fingers closed over her husband's hand in a clinging grasp.

"But, my darling, it seems strange that you should have forgotten how ill I had been—that it would have been impossible for me to have held Miss Rochester in my arms, or to have supported her upon my breast at that time!" said Dr. Winthrop smiling again.

"I never thought of that," Salome answered, wondering how she could have been so thoughtless and stupid. "If it had been you, you would have looked thin and white; but I was so wild with grief that it did not once occur to me to question your identity," and the sweet face looking up into his began to clear, while she rested more contentedly in his embrace.

She was beginning to realize that no rival could ever usurp her place in her husband's heart—that his love for her was as strong and deathless as hers for him.

"More than that, love," he said. "Norman came to me only a short time ago, and confessed his love for Miss Rochester. I will tell you frankly that I expected to be obliged to marry her, although it almost seemed to me that it would be a crime to do so, when my heart was so filled with your image."

And then he explained to Salome how he had been drawn into making a proposal to the scheming girl and been accepted, and she listened with a strange look on her face, although she made no comment on the tale.

"But you have spoken of your illness at the chateau—how long were you ill there?" Dr. Winthrop inquired, when his story was told.

"Three weeks."

"It does not seem possible!" he cried astonished. "How could they manage to keep your presence in the house concealed so long? They told me that you had a fainting turn, and, fearing you were going to be ill, you had insisted upon going back to Paris. I supposed you

were with the sisters and being most tenderly cared for, never suspecting the contrary until Harriet came to the chateau to inquire for you, and told me that no one knew anything about you; but—tell me just how it all happened, and how you were lured into that wretched place where I found you to-day."

Salome began with the day when she fainted in the hall before Mrs. Rochester's door, and told him everything that had occurred up to the time when she had discovered his presence in the ward, where she was a prisoner in Dr. Arnot's asylum for lunatics.

Dr. Winthrop listened with a stern, white face, as all the treachery of those two women was revealed to him, and realized how they had plotted not only to ruin her life, but to make a dupe of him also.

"About this petition for a divorce—when was it sent, Salome?" he gravely asked, when she had concluded this portion of her story.

She gave him the exact date.

"And to whom?—what was the lawyer's name?"

She told him.

"Ah! he was abroad last year—I know him. Miss Rochester must have met him then. Why, Salome, he is one of the most unprincipled scamps in his profession!—he will do anything for money, and is most successful in this particular branch of his business. He makes a specialty of procuring divorces secretly, and is very cunning in bringing about just what his clients desire. But," he added, "we will see if we cannot put a stop to these proceedings at once."

"Oh, can you—can you?" Salome eagerly cried.

"I am going to try," he answered gravely. "I shall send a cable message commanding—if the decree has not already been granted—that all further attempts to obtain a separation be dropped—that such is the wish of both you and myself."

"Oh, do, do! I wish, oh, I wish you would go this moment to send it," Salome cried, clinging to him nervously, and raising an appealing look to him.

"It will do just as well an hour hence, love," he re-

turned soothingly, "and there is much about you that I still wish to learn. How did it happen that I found you in the hospital in this disguise? how did you happen to be in Paris at all? how did you escape from that terrible fire? Oh, my darling, go back to the hour of our separation and tell me everything—spare no one, for I must know the whole truth, no matter whom it involves."

Salome leaned back in his arms, and, laying her head upon his shoulder, where she could look up and watch every varying expression of his dear face, began her story, and told him, as he requested, all that had occurred since their parting in New York. She tried to be as lenient as possible in speaking of his mother and sister, but she was truthful, and he could not fail to understand how much they had been to blame for the suffering which they had both been called upon to endure.

"What a tale!" he exclaimed, when she concluded; "it is full of romance—full of suffering, too. What danger, love, you have been in; what a narrow escape you had from that burning building. But nothing shall ever separate us again—not a thousand treacherous women; not a hundred marriage contracts made by arbitrary match-makers."

Salome's lovely face brightened at his words like a flower after a refreshing shower.

"Then you do not regret the fortune which your uncle left you upon such strange conditions?" she said inquiringly.

"Regret it, love! A world in the balance with you would be as nothing," he cried, and caught her to him with a passion, which told her how heartfelt were his words.

It was very sweet, very comforting to her to be so loved after all the loneliness and barrenness of her life, during the long months of their separation.

But presently she raised her head and searched his face earnestly.

"What is it, dear? why are you so grave, as if you were regretting the fortune that I have lost?" he asked smilingly.

"I was wondering how I could best tell you something

else," she remarked, with something of hesitation in her manner.

"What do you mean? is it that old secret of the past?" he asked, growing grave, "the history of your life which has been the cause of so much suspicion, persecution, and wrong? Of course I shall be glad to have you give me your confidence, dear; but whatever you may have to tell me can never make the slightest difference in my love for you."

She smiled.

"I know it," she said, "and had I only known a little more of your own history, all this trouble and sorrow need never have come upon us. A word would have set everything right."

"If you had known a little more of my history? I do not understand you, Salome," Dr. Winthrop remarked, looking perplexed.

"Why did you not tell me about this Rochester-Hamilton contract?"

"Because I hated the very thought of it; and after I had broken the conditions, and forfeited my fortune by marrying the woman I loved, there was nothing to be said. Besides, what possible difference could it have made in our relations?"

"It would have made this difference, True," Salome said, as she regarded him with tender earnestness, "that we should have escaped all that has made us so wretched, for I—your wife—am the Sadie Rochester whom you were destined by that arbitrary will to marry; you have already fulfilled the contract, which you so hated to contemplate, and the united estates of Brookside and Englehurst might have been our home long ago, if you had but confided to me the fact that you were Milton Hamilton's heir and namesake."

Dr. Winthrop sat regarding his wife in speechless astonishment during this explanation.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, as she concluded, "I am half tempted to believe that your brain has been turned after all. You surely cannot know what you are saying!"

"Oh, yes, I do. What I have told you is a fact," she quietly returned. "My true name—the poor name that has occasioned so much suspicion and trouble—is Salome Howland Rochester."

"And you are the Miss Rochester—the daughter of my uncle's friend—whom these two wills destined me to marry?" the young physician cried, his face still blank with amazement and incredulity.

"Yes."

"Then who is this other girl who has been masquerading under your name, and trying to trick me into a marriage with her?" he demanded in perplexity.

"Her real name is Sarah Rockwell. My father married Mrs. Rockwell, who was the widow of a cousin of my mother, when her daughter was a girl of twelve, and I was ten years of age. That would make her a distant cousin, in fact we called ourselves cousins, until she came to live in the same house with me.

"Her mother stipulated, when she became my father's wife, that her daughter should be regularly adopted so that she could bear the same name, and thus she became Sarah Rochester. How she came to be called Sadie you will understand as I go on. When I was a little child I had a nurse who was very fond of me and she would not call me Salome. She said the name was too old-fashioned—too old-maidish. She tried to nickname me by calling me 'Lomie;' but this my mother objected to, and the nurse laughingly said there was nothing else but Sally. 'Yes, we can call her Sadie,' said my mother, and Sadie I was from that time on. After my father's second marriage it was a little troublesome to have two children in the family with names so nearly alike, and my step-mother wanted to use my whole name, Salome; but my father had become accustomed to the other, and would not countenance the change. As I said before, she was twelve and I ten when she came to live with us, and she shared equally with me in every advantage, for Mrs. Rochester was particular to demand as much for her child, in every respect, as my father gave to his. But from the very first she was strangely jealous of me, and though she dared

not be otherwise than civil to me in my father's presence, it was soon patent to me that she was secretly my bitter enemy. My father was an invalid for many years, but though he was often irritable and had many whims and fancies, as invalids often have—even though he was strangely cold and indifferent to me—I loved him very dearly, and was never so happy as when I was in his room waiting upon him and ministering to his many wants. He had his own private attendant, but he often used to tell me that I was the better nurse of the two, and I know that I did become quite proficient in the care of him. We came abroad shortly after his marriage with Mrs. Rockwell, and travelled about from place to place, according to his pleasure or fancy; but nothing was ever said to me about his plans for my future, until a few months before he died. Then one day he told me that he had pledged me to the son and heir of his dearest friend and college chum, Milton Hamilton; who, although he resided in New York most of the time, owned the estate adjoining Brookside—a fine place belonging to my father, but which he had left after my mother's death and had only visited at intervals since. I supposed from what my father told me, that the name of the man whom he wanted me to marry was also Hamilton; he did not tell me that he was simply the adopted son of his friend. He said that he was expecting him to join us abroad that fall, and he wished me to be prepared to give him a gracious reception. Of course I secretly rebelled at this arbitrary disposition of my hand; but at the time he told me about it, he was not as well as usual, and I said nothing in reply, fearing to excite him if I opposed the arrangement in any way. It came out afterward that he had told his wife more than he told me regarding these plans, but even she was appalled upon learning the truth regarding the disposal of his property. My father died very suddenly one day, while we were all out shopping, and we came home to find the servants wild with excitement, and the house in the greatest confusion. Mrs. Rochester is, however, a woman of rare executive ability, as you have doubtless learned, and she managed everything during this un-

looked-for emergency very wisely, and with the utmost propriety.

"Every mark of respect was paid to the dead, and even the most critical could have found no fault with her deportment and arrangements at this time. But when the will was produced and read she was simply furious. It was then, too, that I learned the whole truth regarding his plans for my future. The will stated that I was to marry Mr. Hamilton's heir, or forfeit the Rochester homestead and a hundred thousand dollars besides; fifty thousand dollars alone being held in reserve for me in case I refused to comply with my father's wishes. A will to the same tenor and effect was made after his marriage with Mrs. Rockwell, which stated that the income of the previously mentioned fifty thousand dollars should go to her if I married Mr. Hamilton's heir; if I did not, she was simply to share a certain amount of the income until I married to please myself, when she would receive ten thousand outright. The income of the fifty thousand dollars was to revert to me at her death. I will not attempt to describe her anger over this state of affairs. She claimed that my father had promised her fifty thousand dollars, and that he had shamefully wronged her by making such a will. She appeared to imagine that I was responsible for it, and she treated me accordingly. Of course she immediately became very anxious that I should fulfil the Rochester-Hamilton contract; you were expected to arrive at any time, and she insisted that the marriage must be solemnized immediately upon your arrival, or as soon after as it could be arranged.

"I was shocked at what seemed to me such indecent haste, especially when there had been a death so recently in the family, and I rebelled; besides, the idea of promising to marry a man whom I had never seen, and who, for aught I knew, might not be attracted to me, was horrible. She demanded a promise of obedience; I was high-spirited and refused to give it, and even threatened to leave her and return to America to escape you. Thereupon she locked me in my room, telling me that I should remain there a prisoner until I relented and came to her terms.

This only made matters worse, arousing a feeling of antagonism and obstinacy within me; and one day, when Mrs. Rochester and Sarah were out driving, I bribed the maid, who was left to guard me, to let me run away. She sympathized with me, and agreed to the proposal. She even packed my trunk, and had it secretly taken out to a carriage which she ordered. I went directly to Calais, then to Dover, and from there to London. I remained there for a few weeks, trying to find some congenial employment, when, one day, I met a man who had once been a servant in our family.

"This meeting frightened me so I went to Liverpool, boarded a steamer, and sailed directly to Boston, where I arrived one dreary day in November. I had very little money left when I reached that city and felt like a stranger in a strange land, although America was my native country. I had never had to depend upon myself for a livelihood, but I knew that I must now do something. A happy inspiration led me to the City Hospital, for I believed that my experience in the sick-room of my father had fitted me for a nurse. The superintendent appeared to be pleased with me, even agreeing to give me a trial without the required recommendations and—the rest you know already, True."

"My darling, what a sad experience you have had!" said Dr. Winthrop sadly. "It is no wonder that you rebelled against that wretched contract; but you need not have feared me. I was no less averse to it, for I felt that two men had no right to thus control the destinies of others. Still I had promised that I would meet you, and only the breaking out of an epidemic in New York prevented my arriving in Berlin before your father's death. I wrote, explaining the delay, but it seems that my letter was never received. I intended, if we were pleased with each other, to ask you to be my wife, but I should never have urged the union—I could never have made any woman my wife against her will, even though a dozen fortunes were to be won by such a measure."

"And I imagined that you were eager for the marriage," replied Salome. "I thought you were coming to us to

make it merely a matter of business, and I should be sacrificed at any cost. If I could have but known how well I should love you, how happy we might have been!" she concluded with a sigh.

"Ah, if I had but listened to you when you first wished to tell me your story, my darling, it would have saved us much of the sorrow that we have since known," her husband remarked regretfully.

"Perhaps and yet——" Salome began thoughtfully.

"Yet what, my Peace?"

"I believe we should not have been so content in each other's love; we might have had a feeling—a suspicion that each was thinking more of the union of the fortunes than the union of hearts, if we had met as was planned in the first place. I believe that I love you better for all the trial and sorrow."

CHAPTER XLIV.

SALOME CONTINUES HER STORY.

"ALL this has been a test, at any rate," Salome continued, after a few moments of thoughtful silence. "We are both sure that no unworthy motive has influenced us. We know that we preferred each other to wealth. I fled from my home rather than be driven into a marriage with one whom I was not sure I could love, while you insisted upon marrying me without regard to the fortune which you believed you were forfeiting."

"Yes, it has been a test, as you say. Still I cannot be reconciled to our long separation. Oh, my darling, I have been very desolate without you! Just think of all the precious time that we have lost!" Dr. Winthrop said, with a quiver of pain in his tones.

"It has not been wholly lost, dear," Salome returned, lifting her tender face upon which there glowed a holy light, "for I believe we have both tried to do some good in the world; out of our own sorrow, we have tried to be helpful to others. True we have suffered," and she shivered slightly; "but I am sure we shall both appreciate the joy of the future far more on account of it. I know," and her voice grew gravely sweet, "that I have helped to smooth and cheer the last of life for one, who, for many years, had led a very bitter and sorrowful existence; besides, I trust that I have won no mean victory over my own heart during my experiences here in Paris."

Dr. Winthrop bent and touched her brow almost reverently with his lips.

"Dear heart, I understand you," he said with emotion. "You have rewarded evil with good by saving the lives of those who have injured you; you have been an angel, my Salome!"

"No, True, I did not mean that," she replied, smiling faintly and flushing. "I am far from being angelic, I assure you. But I confess there was much of bitterness in my heart; I am afraid that I was almost revengeful. Even when you asked me to go to the chateau, I had quite a struggle with myself before I could conquer; but now while I feel that I may have been instrumental in doing some good, I know that I have reaped a hundredfold in the conquest over self."

Dr. Winthrop could not speak for a few moments. He folded her in a close embrace, and marvelled at the beautiful spirit that could be so gentle and forgiving toward those whose only object had been to crush her. For himself, he felt that he never could forgive his mother and sister for their treacherous scheming, their heartlessness and ill-will. He could see that they had been determined to separate them from the first, and he wondered how they would feel when they should learn the truth.

"Did madam—your mother write you about my meeting a strange man one day?" Salome questioned, breaking in upon these reflections.

Madam's threat had suddenly recurred to her, and she wished to learn just how much her husband had been told.

"Yes, dear, but I wrote her in reply that I trusted my wife implicitly. Evelyn, she said, had been an eye-witness of the meeting, and they were both evidently very curious. But I felt sure that there had been nothing wrong in it—that if anything had occurred which I ought to know, you would yourself explain it to me upon my return," Dr. Winthrop replied.

"Thank you, dear True, for your confidence in me," Salome said, as she lifted her lips and touched his in a grateful caress—one which her husband doubly appreciated, since it was the first one she had voluntarily given him. "There was nothing suspicious or wrong in the meeting, on my part, although it may have seemed so to her," she continued. "The man was the same one whom I met in London; as I told you, he had been a servant in our family—he went abroad with us to wait upon my father, attend to our baggage, and make himself generally use-

ful. He had always pretended to be very fond of me, and though this may have been all very well when I was a child, it became very annoying as I grew older. When I was about nineteen, he one day boldly made love to me. I went to my father and told him at once of the insult, and he discharged the man on the spot. He was very angry, and vowed that he would be avenged upon us. He did not leave the country, but continued to follow us about from place to place. Although this was not pleasant, we did not fear him, or imagine that he would dare do us any injury. He must have known about my father's death, and of my subsequent flight—he even traced me to London, though what possible good he could have expected to gain by so doing I cannot understand. I do not think he could have known of my sailing for America, for I never saw him again until we met in New York that day. I was greatly annoyed and frightened, for it seemed to me then that he was bent upon doing me some injury, and I cannot tell you how I longed for you, True, to protect me from him and his further insults. His name was William Brown, and he was a very smart, capable man in certain ways, but I sincerely hope I shall never see him again."

Dr. Winthrop's lip curled with scorn as he thought how his sister had played the spy upon his pure-minded, innocent wife. How utterly contemptible it seemed to him, and how simple the circumstances of the meeting, although, as his mother had represented it, there had seemed to be something perplexing and suspicious connected with it.

"I blame myself very much, Salome, for leaving you behind when I was called abroad to my father," he said regretfully. "If I had only listened to your pleadings and taken you with me, I could have saved you all these wretched experiences. But I feared the voyage for you in the dead of winter, for you were far from strong. I knew if you took cold and were ill again it would go hard with you; so, though it nearly unmanned me to refuse you and leave you, I believed it was the only right thing for me to do."

"I know you acted as you thought best, True, and I never thought of blaming you," Salome answered. "The only thing that I rebelled against and questioned, was your apparently harsh judgment of me in sending me from your home, as if you regretted having ever brought me there; but now, knowing that you never received my letter, and understanding why you sent me away, I can see that I misjudged you."

"It is not strange at all," Dr. Winthrop said, feeling that she had been very lenient in her estimate of his aparent injustice. Then he added, with some curiosity:

"How do you account, Salome, for the fact that Miss Rochester has been masquerading under your name and position."

"That is very easily explained," the young wife answered. "They were excessively alarmed after I ran away from them, for of course they realized that upon me depended the hope of their ultimately coming into the possession of the income of the fifty thousand dollars mentioned in my father's will. All this, you understand, I learned from them during my illness at the chateau. They believed me to be dead—they had seen a notice in a London paper, shortly after my disappearance, of the death of a girl bearing my name and answering to my description, a friendless girl, who had met with an accident, and been carried to the Home for the Friendless—and Mrs. Rochester conceived the plan of representing Sarah as the Rochester heiress, marrying her to the Hamilton heir, and thus securing, a fine position and great wealth for her daughter, besides the handsome income referred to in my father's will for herself. Sarah was very readily changed to Sadie, and to inquisitive people, who had known that there were two Miss Rochesters, it was easy to say that she had lost her own daughter, and her only companion was now her husband's child. We had been abroad for years, consequently had grown out of the remembrance of our old acquaintances, and no one would be the wiser for the deception. It was a very cunning plot and very cleverly developed, as you know, while if they had failed in making you their victim, they

would still have had the fifty thousand dollars, provided I never made my appearance to claim it. The first intimation they had that I was not the girl who had died in London, was upon being told whom you had married by Madame Winthrop, but they thought they were safe again upon hearing that I had lost my life in that fire, and they believed that if they could secure you they would never have anything to fear hereafter. You can perhaps imagine their astonishment and dismay when, upon removing my cap and spectacles, after I had fainted before their door, in the chateau, they discovered who I was. Of course they recognized me instantly, and when they found I was too ill to be removed, they planned to conceal me in Sarah's room until I should be well enough to be secretly sent away. Even then, I did not know that you were the heir of my father's friend. Your mother and sister had represented to me that you had been pledged to some one else at the time of our marriage, but they did not tell me to whom, and I had no idea that you were in any way concerned until Sarah Rochester herself told me, on the day that she discovered my identity. It seemed as if the knowledge must kill me—as if everything in my life had gone at cross purposes. I was already the wife of the man whom my father had willed I should marry—the man whom I had fled from because I feared he would be odious to me, but whom fate had decreed that I should love with my whole soul. It seemed to me then as if I had recklessly thrown my life and my happiness away, for if I had remained quietly with Mrs. Rochester, you would ultimately have come to us, we should have been mutually attracted, and there would have been nothing to interfere with our future happiness. Of course, when they told me this, I understood all their plot at once. I knew why Sarah's name had been changed to Sadie—why they were travelling with you, and the end they hoped to attain. I could understand, too, what a marplot they must regard me—that they must fear that I would betray their secret and spoil all their plans. It would be a terrible thing for Mrs. Rochester, after having carried her deception so far to be obliged to confess that

she had been palming off her own daughter as the child of her husband, just to get his money and secure her a brilliant position in life. When they discovered, however, that I had no intention of revealing my identity to you, they recovered themselves somewhat, but I did not dream that they were plotting to shut me up in that dreadful place."

"They are a couple of hardened criminals, and they shall be made to suffer for their wrong-doing; I will not spare them," Dr. Winthrop said sternly.

"Ah! but they have been foiled in it—that will be a terrible punishment to them; and—and we are happy, True; I cannot wish anybody any ill," Salome responded, as she laid her soft cheek against her husband's with a trustful, contented air, that touched him deeply.

"That is true; but such people deserve to be dealt with to the extent of the law. When I think how they have tried to divorce us, and almost tricked me into this hated marriage, I feel as if nothing could be too bad for them," he replied with a frown.

"I do not mind anything now, that I know you love me," Salome said, with gleaming eyes. "The cruellest pang I suffered was when I believed you loved her—Sarah. O True, I was desperate enough then to do anything; you must know I was, or I never could have signed that letter to the New York lawyer."

"The more I think of it, the more amazed I grow at the daring of those scheming women. I am almost tempted to believe that Sarah Rochester would have married me, even if she had failed to secure the decree, to gain her point," Dr. Winthrop said, with a shrug of repulsion. "I begin to believe that people will do anything to attain wealth; truly, 'the love of money is the root of all evil.' But their consigning you to Dr. Arnot's mad-house was the worst of all, and I swear that Mrs. Rochester shall be made to answer for that horrible crime. Oh, my darling, what if I had never gone there!"

Salome shuddered and clung to him. She could hardly persuade herself, even now, that the blessed present was not, after all, a mere dream or vision, and that she should

not awake by and by, to find herself back in that wretched place, and surrounded by the hapless beings who had been her companions for so long.

"Do not let us talk of it any more, True; I do not want to think of anything now, but that I am safe, and belong wholly to you once more," she sighed, a thrill of deep joy running through all her tones.

Dr. Winthrop's heart bounded within him at her words, for they had told him how entirely she belonged to him.

"My wife! my wife!" he murmured fondly.

Salome lifted her arms, and twined them about his neck, drawing his face down to hers until their lips met.

It was the first time she had ever given such free expression to her affection for him, and it told him that her last doubt of his love—her last fear that he had married her from a sense of gratitude or duty had vanished forever, and that henceforth only the most perfect trust would exist between them.

Just at that moment there came a tap upon the door.

Harriet was very discreet, and had taken this way to warn the supposed lovers of her approach.

Salome released herself from her husband's embrace and bade her come in; but the lovely flush upon her cheeks, the light of the perfect happiness that beamed from her eyes told their own story even before she said:

"Harriet, my good friend, it is but right that I should confide in you now. Dr. Winthrop is my husband. We were married nearly two years ago."

The woman looked amazed for a moment, then recovering herself, responded, with a wise smile:

"I knew he was something to you, Miss Salome, the moment I saw you together; but I'm bound to confess I'd no idea that you got along quite so far. I'm sure I wish you both a great deal of joy. But—dinner's ready," she concluded practically, "and you'd both better come and have something to eat."

Dr. Winthrop laughed heartily at this sudden descent from sentiment to the realities of life; but drawing Salome's arm through his, they followed the woman to an-

other room, where they found a tempting repast awaiting them.

Harriet refused to join them at the table, resolutely insisting that she should feel more at home if she served them.

After the meal was over Dr. Winthrop led Salome again into the cozy parlor, and then said:

"Now, love, I am going at once to send my cable message, and I shall not return again until I receive a reply. It may take a good many hours, but I shall make as quick and as thorough a business as possible of it, you may be very sure. But meantime," he added, looking a trifle envious, "shall you feel quite safe to be left here over night?—shall you not feel lonely?"

"Oh, no; Harriet and I have been here many a night by ourselves, and besides there is a passage by which we can gain an entrance to the convent—we have only to pull a bell, and some one will come to us at once," Salome replied confidently.

"Then I shall feel easy about you," her husband said, his face clearing. "But," he added with a smile, as he touched her coarse, gray serge dress, "when I come back to join you to-morrow I shall want to find my wife in some more fitting garb than this."

"I have no longer any need of a disguise, and I shall be very glad to don some more becoming apparel," Salome said, smiling, as she lifted her lips for his parting caress.

Even then she let him go with reluctance. She followed him to the door, and let him out with her own hands, while she told him with a shy smile and blush, that the time would seem long until he returned.

Then she went back to Harriet, who could no longer restrain the delight which the beautiful, happy face afforded her, and who caught her in her strong arms and gave her a vigorous hug.

"Bless your dear heart, Miss Salome!" she cried; "it does my old soul good to see that light on your face, and to know that you are happier than any queen on her throne. Now I am just dying to know the whole story.

Sit down, and tell me all about it, while I eat my dinner."

Salome obeyed, and sitting opposite the faithful creature, gave her a brief history of all that we already know.

"I knew those women were a couple of dev—fallen angels," Harriet dryly remarked, when Salome told her how Mrs. Rochester had plotted to get her into the asylum. "It didn't take me long to find that out when I went to nurse them through the cholera, for all they were so sweet when Dr. Winthrop was around. And to think that you were his wife and he never suspected it all the time you were taking care of him! No wonder you grew white and thin, with all the care, and with all you've suffered since. Bless my heart! but I don't envy his mother and sister when they find out who was so good to them, when they were near dying with the plague. I hope they'll never get over the shame of it—never!"

"And I hope, Harriet, that it will prove to be the one thing that will break down their pride and make them love me," Salome responded, with grave sweetness.

CHAPTER XLV.

"IT IS ALL RIGHT, MY DARLING!"

AFTER leaving Salome, Dr. Winthrop hastened at once to a telegraph office, where he wrote the following cable message:

"To CONRAD CONVERSE,
"Chambers Street, New York:
"You are hereby notified to quash at once all proceedings for divorce of Truman H. Winthrop and Salome Winthrop. Answer immediately, stating exactly how matters stand.

"TRUMAN H. WINTHROP,
"SALOME H. WINTHROP."

Having dispatched this, the young physician went at once to his hotel, where, after writing some letters, he retired, to try to shorten by sleep the long hours which must intervene before he could go again to Salome.

To say that he was anxious regarding the answer he would receive to his message, but faintly expresses the torturing suspense which he experienced.

It was impossible for him to sleep. He tossed on his bed for hours, then arose and resolutely applied himself to hard study until the day dawned. Then he refreshed himself with a cold bath, after which he took a long walk. Upon his return he dallied as long as possible with his breakfast, read his newspaper, smoked a cigar, while it seemed as if the time had never passed so slowly.

He wished now that he had not told Salome he would not go to her until he heard from the lawyer, for he might at least have spent a few hours of the morning with her. He was half tempted to go, as it was, but the message

might come while he was away, and he was becoming almost feverishly impatient to receive it.

It is useless to attempt to describe that long, long day. Truman Winthrop's powers of endurance were tested to their utmost, for no word came to him until six o'clock that evening. He signed for the dispatch with a hand that trembled so that no one would ever have recognized his signature.

With a face as white as his handkerchief and a heavily beating heart he tore open the message and read these words:

"No decree granted; unforeseen delay caused by endless red tape. All proceedings stopped as commanded. Utmost secrecy has been observed.

"CONRAD CONVERSE."

A long, long sigh of relief burst from the young man, after reading this and for a few moments he was almost unmanned.

"She is still mine, thank God!" he murmured, after perusing the message a second time; "I could hardly have borne to have learned that the tie had been annulled, even though she would have given herself unreservedly to me again. Now all will be well—oh, my love, I believe there is a blessed future in store for us."

He put the precious message carefully away to show Salome, then, hastening from the house, he called the first cab he saw and was driven directly to No. 15 Rue de ——.

It was after seven when he arrived at Salome's door and almost dark, but a light was burning in the little parlor, and he knew that some one within was anxiously awaiting his coming.

With a full heart and bounding pulses, he sprang from the carriage and ran lightly up the steps, to find the door almost instantly opened. A white-robed figure sprang into his arms and was clasped to his breast.

"Tell me, True—tell me!" Salome breathed as she twined her arms about his neck and laid her cheek to his.

Her own anxiety, and the suspense she had endured had been no less intense than his.

"It is all right, darling," he tenderly replied, "the man has accomplished nothing—we are still one, and nothing can come between us now. Come and let me show you the answer to my message."

He led her into the parlor, where he put the precious message into her trembling hands.

She was quivering in every nerve, but she read the blessed assurance that she was still Truman Winthrop's wife—that the sacred bond which had united them had not been annulled and a great joy and unutterable thankfulness flooded her heart.

She raised her illumined face to her husband, and he opened his arms to her.

Again she sprang into them, a sob of thankfulness bursting from her.

"All mine! all mine!" he murmured fondly.

"I am so glad, so happy!" she whispered, with her tremulous lips laid against his cheek.

. . . . . .

Three weeks later, in an elegant apartment of one of the finest hotels of Paris, a gentleman and lady might have been seen sitting opposite each other at a daintily spread breakfast-table. On the hotel register in the office below, any one might have read the entry: "Truman H. Winthrop, M. D., New York City, U. S. A.; Mrs. Truman H. Winthrop and maid."

After their reunion, Dr. Winthrop would not allow Salome to remain longer in the little house under the shadow of the convent walls, so it was given up, and taking Harriet with them, as Salome's maid, they went for a time to one of the hotels of the city.

"Well, my Peace, we have been here three weeks, and very happy weeks they have been, too; but is it not about time that we began to plan a little for the future?" Dr. Winthrop remarked, as he pushed his chair back from the table, while his eyes rested with a look of fond admiration upon the lovely figure opposite him.

Salome was exquisitely attired in the palest of pale pink morning robes, richly trimmed with white lace, and

the dress was extremely becoming to her clear, cream-like complexion, dark hair and eyes.

She had changed much during these three weeks. Her face was radiant with happiness, her eyes bright with hope, her manner animated, and even gay. She was wholly unlike the grave, demure little body, who had been known as Sister Angela, and no one would have dreamed that she could have been the same person.

The young wife flushed under her husband's glance. She knew that she was beautiful, and she had begun to take pleasure in the fact, because of his evident delight in it.

"I do not want to plan for anything," she smilingly returned. "I am too happy in just being with you, to take much thought for the future."

"It is very pleasant to hear you say that, my darling," Dr. Winthrop replied, as he came behind her and laid his hand fondly upon her glossy head, "nevertheless, there are some matters which must be attended to without delay. My mŏther and sister must be notified of what has occurred; Miss Rochester must learn that her schemes have failed, and then we must go home to attend to securing what rightly belongs to us; that unprincipled girl shall no longer masquerade in the character and under the name that rightly belongs to you."

"But it seems dreadful to have such disagreeable matters to attend to when we are so happy, does it not?" Salome said with a sigh, as she put up one white hand to draw his face down upon a level with hers where she could look into his eyes.

"I believe, Salome, you are ready to forgive everybody the wrong they have done you," Dr. Winthrop returned, as he searched her thoughtful face. "But I am afraid I am not quite as merciful as you are. I am free to confess to a certain amount of satisfaction—of exultation, even, over the downfall of the plots that have been laid against us; while too, I am strangely curious to see how those wicked people, who have done so much to make us both miserable, will bear their punishment."

"Punishment!" repeated Salome, looking slightly troubled.

"Yes, dear; they all deserve a severe lesson, and I mean they shall have it," the young man replied, with some sternness. "Do not look so disturbed, love," he added as he saw the cloud upon her brow. "I am not a vindictive or hard-hearted man, but I am determined that justice shall be done. I think you may safely trust me to manage it in a proper manner."

"I will leave it all with you," Salome said confidingly, and feeling very sure that he would do nothing wrong, although she shrank with keen sensitiveness, from anything which would seem like revenge for her wrongs.

"Then what do you say to a trip to Rome next week?" her husband asked.

"Must I meet them?" she cried, shrinking closer to him.

"Not if you recoil from it," he responded, "but I promised my mother that I would join her at the end of two months. Six weeks have already passed, and I think it will be wise not to keep her longer in ignorance of what has occurred. I could go alone, only I cannot make up my mind to be separated from you——"

"No—no, True, where you go, I must go," Salome cried, clinging to him.

"I thought that would be your decision, dear. You shall not meet any of them if you so desire it; still you can easily understand that all these recent developments must be explained, and business matters settled sooner or later. When I have anything disagreeable to do, I like to attack it boldly and get it off my mind," Dr. Winthrop concluded, smiling.

"That is the better way, of course," Salome gravely answered. "I suppose I must meet them all again, some time and I may as well school myself to the ordeal first as last. As for Mrs. Rochester and her daughter, I believe I should be glad never to see them again, although I wish them no ill; but, True, for your sake, I would like to win the hearts of your mother and sister."

"Can you forgive them for all they made you suffer in New York, Salome?" her husband wonderingly asked as he searched her earnest face.

The young wife flushed. It was not an easy matter to

crush all sense of injury out of her heart, but strengthened by the great love which she bore her husband, she believed she could in time do even this.

"Yes, for your sake, True," she said softly.

He touched her forehead reverently.

"You are more noble than I, dear, for I cannot say as much as that," he gravely returned.

There were a few more days of perfect peace and content in Paris, and then Dr. Winthrop and his wife set out for Rome.

They did not linger on their way, but arrived in Rome near the close of a pleasant afternoon during the latter part of December.

They drove directly to the Hotel Quirinal in the Via Nazionale, where they found pleasant rooms and excellent service.

After they had had their dinner, Dr. Winthrop repaired to the smoking-room to enjoy his cigar, hoping that he might find some one whom he knew.

He had not been seated ten minutes when he was slapped upon the shoulder, and looking up, he saw his friend Tillinghast beside him.

It was a joyful meeting.

"I never dreamed of seeing you here to-night, old fellow!" the young man exclaimed. "When did you arrive?"

"Not quite two hours ago," Dr. Winthrop replied.

"Then you have not seen your family. I called there a few nights ago and found them all well excepting your brother; he looks like a ghost, though he says he is all right," Mr. Tillinghast remarked, wondering why his friend was stopping at a hotel instead of going to his family. "I suppose you will be going around there soon," he said, in conclusion.

"No, not to-night," briefly returned the young physician.

"Oh! then you intend to remain here over night?"

"Yes, and possibly for some time."

"I tell you what, Winthrop," his friend cried, all aglow with hospitality, and seeing that there was some mysterious reason why he did not join his family. "We—my

father and the rest of us—have taken a villa not far from here—there are acres of room in it, and you must come home with me; my people are just dying to show you how grateful they are for saving me from that terrible plague. I will not take no for an answer—you shall not stop a single night in a beastly hotel," he continued resolutely.

"Beastly," repeated Dr. Winthrop, smiling at his friend's extravagant expression. "We have secured good rooms, the service is above that of the average foreign hotel, and we are very comfortable."

"Well, but all hotels are beastly compared with a well-ordered American home. But," regarding his companion searchingly, "you used the plural; who are we?"

"My wife and I."

"Your wife! Good gracious, man! it is an open secret among the American population here that you are going to marry Miss Rochester, and that the wedding is set for no distant date," exclaimed Tillinghast, in undisguised astonishment.

"That is a mistake," Dr. Winthrop calmly replied, as he coolly dislodged the ashes from his cigar. "I am not going to marry Miss Rochester—possibly my brother may be the happy bridegroom if everything goes well. As for myself, I am already married, as I told you, and my wife is with me."

"I cannot comprehend you, Winthrop," his companion returned, and looking perplexed. "When were you married?"

"A little less than two years ago."

"But I thought you lost your wife—that she perished in some fire."

"So I believed until recently; but she was saved and I came upon her in an almost miraculous way in Paris, less than two months since. Sister Angela, to whom you and I both owe so much, was my wife!"

"Winthrop! you take away my breath. I cannot believe it!"

"It is a long story, but if you can spare me a few minutes I will give you a brief outline of it," Dr. Winthrop

responded, and then proceeded to tell how he had found Salome and something of her previous history.

After all was told he insisted that his friend should go up to their parlor and be introduced, and the young man could scarcely credit his senses when he was ushered into the presence of the beautiful woman and Dr. Winthrop smilingly remarked:

"Tillinghast, allow me to present you to my wife; but I hardly think you will need any introduction."

Salome greeted him with charming cordiality, and laughingly exclaimed:

"You hardly recognize Sister Angela, do you, Mr. Tillinghast?"

"It does not seem possible that you can be one and the same," he replied, as he bowed low over her hand; "but, Mrs. Winthrop, if it is true—and I cannot doubt it—I owe you a great deal."

"You surely do, Fred; you and many others would have died but for the faithful nursing which you had," said Dr. Winthrop gravely.

"Pray do not give me more credit than I deserve, True," his wife interposed, flushing slightly, "for I am sure that the treatment which his conscientious and intelligent physician bestowed upon him was no less efficacious. But," she added, to change the subject, as she turned again to her guest, "I think Dr. Winthrop is very fortunate in finding you here. I, too, am very happy to meet you again."

Could it be possible that this lovely girl, with her perfect composure, her high-bred manner, her graceful figure, and beautiful face, was the quiet, demure, and self-contained nun who, in her unbecoming dress, had done so much for him in Paris? It was hard for him to believe it.

"Thank you," he replied; "but I assure you, I regard myself as the favored one, and I have been trying to persuade the doctor to come home with me. Won't you second me, Mrs. Winthrop, please? It will give us all great pleasure to entertain you."

"You are very good, Fred, and we appreciate your hos-

pitality," Dr. Winthrop interposed; "but I think we will remain where we are for the present."

"Then you will at least honor my mother's reception to-night," the young man eagerly urged. "She is to entertain the American Consul, and all America will be there—at least all that is resident in Rome at present—and I am sure she would be greatly disappointed—knowing you were here—if you were not present."

Dr. Winthrop turned to Salome.

"Are you too weary from your journey to go, dear?" he asked.

"I am not weary at all; we have come so short a distance to-day," she answered. "But——" and she glanced inquiringly at him.

He knew of what she was thinking—that she would probably meet his mother, sister, and the Rochesters at this reception—and he smiled reassuringly; then turned again to his friend, remarking:

"Thank you, Fred; we shall be happy to accept your invitation. At what hour does Mrs. Tillinghast receive?"

"At nine, and later. I am delighted, old fellow. And now I will go to take the good news to my mother," the young man said, rising to leave.

"True," said Salome, as soon as the door closed after him, "I am afraid they will be terribly surprised—it will be a great shock to them."

"I want them to be taken by surprise," he replied sternly; "that is to be a part of their punishment. Do you not think that I was surprised, shocked, when I looked back down that ward and saw my wife upon her knees appealing to me? And, Salome," he continued more quietly, "I want you to look your best to-night—wear that exquisite costume of white lace, which we selected at Worth's, and I wish you had your diamonds here! Oh, my love, how very proud you were to leave all my gifts behind!" he concluded reproachfully.

"True, my husband, believing as I did, I could not take anything that your money had purchased for me—every gift, every obligation was a burden on my heart.

Besides," she added smiling, "everything would have been burned. It is fortunate I did leave your gifts behind, for now I can have them again."

"Ah, I did not think of that," he said thoughtfully. "Still I wish you had the diamonds."

"I have diamonds," Salome quietly returned; "some very fine ones, too; they are a part of the legacy left me by Miss Leonard, and," with a roguish little twinkle gleaming from her eyes, "I think I shall be able to make myself quite presentable for Mrs. Tillinghast's reception."

CHAPTER XLVI.

"SADIE ROCHESTER IS ALREADY MY WIFE!"

TWO hours later Salome emerged from her chamber and the careful hands of her maid, and presented herself before her husband.

"Will I do, True?" she quietly inquired, but with a conscious smile wreathing her red lips. It was not one of vanity, either, but of pure pleasure in her beauty for her husband's sake.

Dr. Winthrop threw down the paper he had been reading and turned eagerly at the sound of her voice.

A low exclamation of delight escaped him.

"Will you do?" he repeated. "Why, Salome, you are absolutely perfect, from the crown of your dainty head to the sole of that tiny pearl-embroidered slipper!"

And truly she was.

Over a rich, lustrous white satin skirt there had been artistically draped an overdress of lace of an exquisite pattern, its folds being caught in various places by masses of gleaming satin ribbons and delicate sprays of frosted silver, representing bleached ferns. The foundation of the corsage was low, but the filmy lace came up high in the neck, except where it sloped away at the front in a V revealing her beautiful neck, which was like ivory.

There were no sleeves, save a fall of lace about a finger in width over the round shoulders, while her long gloves came a little above her elbows, revealing a portion of her perfect arm, around which just below the fall of lace, there was clasped a circlet of frosted gold set with diamonds.

Her hair was arranged as she was in the habit of wearing it, but with great care, and fastened here and there with small crescents of diamonds. Around her neck there

was a chain of curiously wrought gold, and suspended from this was a Greek cross set with diamonds as large as peas, while in each ear there gleamed a superb solitaire.

Her eyes were brilliant, her cheeks delicately tinted, her scarlet lips just parted in a smile of anticipation, and she was a creature to make any man's heart throb with delight, as she stood beneath the brilliantly ighted chandelier waiting to receive her husband's verdict.

"I never dreamed how beautiful you were, Salome, until this moment," he breathed, as he bent forward and softly kissed her forehead.

She threw her arms about his neck and laid her head upon his breast. His words of praise were very sweet to her.

"My darling, you will crush your dress," Dr. Winthrop exclaimed, in fond protest.

"I do not care, now that you have seen me. I would not have had a fold disarranged before," she said in reply.

She had dressed more for him than for the crowd of brilliant people who were to throng Mrs. Tillinghast's parlors, and he smiled as he realized how indifferent she was to all other praise. It was evidently her belief that

> "She's adorned
> Amply that in her husband's eye looks lovely—
> The truest mirror that an honest wife
> Can see her beauty in."

They were a little late, and the villa was thronged with guests when they arrived.

Salome could not help feeling a pleasurable excitement in anticipation of mingling once more in society; still she dreaded the meeting with the Winthrops and Rochesters.

After she had removed her wrap she stepped across the hall to a small reception-room, and sat down to wait until her husband should come to take her below. But Mr. Tillinghast had met his friend and found so much to say, that the minutes flew by unheeded, and though Salome did not mind the waiting, she wondered what could keep him.

Suddenly she caught the sound of footsteps, and the

rush of silken garments. The next instant a cry of dismay rang through the room, and, turning with a start, Salome saw Sarah Rochester standing before her, blank astonishment and terror written on her face, while her mother stood in the doorway just behind her, looking over her shoulder, and as pale as the white cashmere wrap that enveloped her form.

They had just arrived, and had mistaken the direction of the usher at the foot of the stairs, turning to the left instead of the right in their search for the dressing-rooms.

"Salome!" burst from the conscience-smitten girl, in a hoarse, unnatural tone, while Mrs. Rochester staggered inside the room and hastily closed the door, her bump of cautiousness asserting itself even in this emergency.

Salome wondered to find herself perfectly calm and self-possessed.

"Yes," she said quietly, rising and confronting them, thus fully revealing the elegance and beauty of her costume; "you did not expect to meet me here this evening."

"Heavens, mamma, it is Salome!" cried Miss Rochester, who had not really known whether it was her hated rival or some one who resembled her in a startling degree.

"Where did you come from?" gasped Mrs. Rochester, and unable to stand longer upon her trembling feet, she sank into the nearest chair.

"From the Hotel Quirinal, a few blocks above here," Salome calmly responded.

Mrs. Rochester made an impatient gesture.

"But how—how——" she began with terrified impatience.

"How did I manage to escape from Dr. Arnot's madhouse?—is that what you want to know, Mrs. Rochester?" Salome demanded, meeting the woman's glance with a stern, direct look. "I can only answer that a merciful Providence delivered me from the horrible fate to which you had doomed me."

"I had doomed you!" repeated Mrs. Rochester, in a shaking voice, great fear contending for the mastery within her.

"Yes, madam; it is useless for you to pretend igno-

rance, or to deny your agency in the matter, for Dr. Arnot confessed it," Salome asserted.

"Dr. Arnot confessed it," the frightened woman whispered with pale lips.

"Mamma, how could it have happened?" Sarah Rochester wildly exclaimed. "How could she have escaped? Who has helped her? And see her! She is dressed like an empress, or rather, like the bride of a prince! That dress is fit for a duchess; those diamonds are almost priceless! What does it mean? Where did you get them?" and she turned savagely upon Salome as she put this last question.

"The diamonds were the gift of a friend, who is dead; the dress was purchased at Worth's in Paris," the young wife placidly returned.

"That is very definite," sneered Miss Rochester, who was beginning to recover herself somewhat. "You are evidently in a mysterious mood to-night. But I would like a straightforward answer to one question: Who brought you here to Rome?—for surely you did not follow us hither alone."

Salome began to feel a trifle uncomfortable; for she knew that it would be a terrible shock to them when they should learn that Dr. Winthrop had rescued her from the prison to which they had doomed her, and brought her to Rome. Badly as they had treated her, wicked and hardened as they were, she could not help pitying them for the despair which she knew must overwhelm them when they should learn the truth.

"Girl, why don't you answer?" angrily demanded Mrs. Rochester, as she hesitated to reply; "who brought you to Rome?"

"Her husband, madam," said a stern, yet familiar voice behind them, and both women, turning at the sound, saw Dr. Winthrop just entering the room.

They could not have been whiter or more motionless if they had been statues hewn from marble, as they for a moment gazed with horror upon him, and realized at last the blasting truth.

Dr. Winthrop went forward to his wife's side and drew

her hand within his arm, with an air which betrayed how fondly devoted he was to her.

"I need not tell you," he continued in the same tone, "that everything has been discovered—all your treachery—all your plotting and crime. I found my wife while visiting Dr. Arnot's lunatic asylum in the pursuit of information regarding diseases of the brain. Madam, do you know the penalty for such a crime as yours?" the young physician demanded, in a voice which seemed to freeze the blood in her veins.

Oh, why had she never thought of such a contingency as this? She might have known that Dr. Winthrop would be going about to visit the various hospitals—why had she not authorized Dr. Arnot to keep Salome confined in a room by herself, and allow no one to see her?

Such thoughts flitted through her brain and drove her nearly to despair; but she was not one to be easily cowed, and she soon rallied her scattered wits, and resolved to put a bold front on the matter.

"But Salome is my daughter. I have committed no crime. As her guardian, I had a perfect right to put her where I chose," she spiritedly retorted.

"Do you imagine that such an argument would be entertained for one moment by a jury, madam? You know very well that it would not, if I proclaimed Salome as my wife, and revealed why you had been guilty of such a crime."

Mrs. Rochester sank back again, appalled by the mention of a jury, but his words had angered her daughter beyond endurance.

She realized that she had lost everything in the game that she had been playing, while Salome had won. The knowledge of her rival's triumph and of her own defeat made her both desperate and reckless.

"Your wife!" she sneered. "Perhaps you may yet find yourself mistaken in that assertion; you may yet regret that you ever brought the girl here to-night to introduce her as Mrs. Winthrop when Rome shall ring with a bit of scandal which shall make your ears tingle."

"I understand you, Miss Rochester," Dr. Winthrop

quietly returned; "but your contemptible spite will never be gratified to that extent; you will never receive the decree of divorce which you attempted to secure, for all proceedings were stopped before any harm was done. A few words of explanation in a cable message were sufficient to achieve that."

The girl turned with a gesture of despair to her mother.

"We are beaten, mamma—miserably beaten!" she cried with white lips, and sinking into a chair she buried her face in her hands.

Dr. Winthrop led his wife quietly from the room, and closed the door upon the two wretched women.

"I am sorry for them," Salome said, with a sigh as they went slowly downstairs.

"They do not deserve a particle of your sympathy," her husband said, with rigidly compressed lips.

He had been obliged to put a severe curb upon himself during the recent interview, lest in his hot indignation he should forget that he was dealing with women.

"But wrong-doing brings far more misery than wrong-bearing," the gentle girl returned.

"And why should it not, dear?" Dr. Winthrop asked. "It is a double sin, for it wrongs one's self and others also. Now, my darling, let me see no clouds on your face to-night, for I want my friends to believe that my wife is happy."

"I am, True; only——"

"Only you have such a tender heart, you wish to bear the burdens of others as well as your own," he interposed, smiling. "Now, dear," he added, "I do not mean to be too hard upon those two sinful women, but surely they do need to be brought to a sense of their guilt. When they manifest a proper spirit, then we will do as One of old taught us—tell them to 'go and sin no more.'"

"O True! will you?" Salome said eagerly. "Then you do not mean to bring them before a jury—you will not pursue them—you will not openly disgrace them?"

"No, love, if they show themselves disposed to do what is right."

Salome's brow cleared at this assurance, and she ex-

erted herself to appear her brightest for her husband's sake.

He led her directly to their hostess, and after introducing her to the members of the family, he left her with Mr. Tillinghast, while he went to seek his mother.

He did not care to have her shocked in the presence of witnesses, but he wanted her to learn that night that he had found his wife; he wanted her to realize also, how she had been plotting against the very woman whom she had been so anxious he should marry.

He knew that she was there, for Mr. Tillinghast had told him that she was among the first to arrive, and he found her at last, conversing with a distinguished-looking elderly gentleman.

Madame Winthrop started, and her face lighted with sudden joy as she caught sight of him—her favorite son.

"My dear boy!" she exclaimed, as she clasped his hand; "when did you arrive?"

"This afternoon, and Tillinghast claimed me at once, telling me that I should meet you here," Dr. Winthrop explained for the benefit of her companion, who, he thought, might wonder why he had not sought his mother first.

She introduced him then to the gentleman, who was a well-known and successful artist, and who, after conversing for a few moments, politely excused himself, and left the mother and son together.

Madam noticed at once that there was a great change in him—his manner was more animated, his face brighter and happier; there was in his tones a glad ring which she had not heard for years, while instead of those sternly compressed lines about his mouth, which had troubled her so long, his lips were constantly wreathed with genial smiles.

"Why have you come upon us so suddenly, True?—why did you not write and let us know when to expect you?" she asked, after the artist had left them.

"I have been very much engaged," he replied evasively, but with a glow upon his face that made her marvel.

"Now that you are here, you will remain through the winter with us, will you not?" she asked wistfully.

"Perhaps—that will depend upon circumstances, however," he answered.

"What circumstances?" she queried archly. "Does that mean if your wife is willing to remain in Rome?"

"Yes," he gravely returned, but knowing well enough that she would interpret his reply far differently from what he meant. Then he added:

"Take my arm, mother, and let us get out of the crowd. I want to talk with you alone."

She obeyed him, flushing with triumph as they passed from the room.

At last her fondest hopes were to be realized—at last the Rochester-Hamilton fortunes would be united, and life henceforth would be *couleur de rose* for her.

Alas! she had no idea of the humiliation which the consummation of these anticipations would bring upon her.

"Do you really mean it, True?" she asked, in a glad low tone, as they reached the conservatory leading from the rear of the grand hall, "that you are ready to marry Sadie Rochester at last?"

"When I leave Rome my wife will accompany me," he remarked, while he tried to think of the best way to break the truth to her.

"That will be delightful! Does Sadie know—is it all settled between you?" and the woman's joyous face was a study.

"Yes, Sadie Rochester is already my wife," he announced with startling abruptness.

"Truman! What—what can you mean?" madam exclaimed, amazed, as she anxiously searched his face.

"Just what I have said, mother."

"You must be crazy then, True, unless you have been married since eight o'clock, for I left Sadie dressing for this reception when I came from home, and apparently the thought of your presence in the city had not entered her mind. I wish you would not joke upon the subject," madam concluded, in a displeased tone.

"I am not joking; I have simply made a truthful state-

ment that Miss Rochester is already my wife. She is here in this house; I have but just introduced her to Mrs. Tillinghast," Dr. Winthrop affirmed, with a positiveness which alarmed his mother.

"My son, there is some mystery about this, and I beg that you will explain yourself. When were you married?"

"Two years ago next month."

"What do you mean?" cried madam, in despair, and beginning to fear that the hard study of the last two months had turned his brain.

"Mother, listen!" the young man commanded. "Sadie Rochester and Sarah Rochester are two different persons. Sadie Rochester ran away from her step-mother because she ill-treated her. She fled to Boston, where she applied for a situation as nurse in the City Hospital. Then a little later she gave up some—too much—of her life-blood to save the life of your son, who afterward fell in love with her and married her. Mother, Salome Howland Rochester was the true Sadie Rochester, and the girl who has tried to palm hers lf off upon me as such is a contemptible impostor."

Madame Winthrop had begun to comprehend the truth soon after her son had commenced to explain, and her face grew deathly white, her eyes almost wild with fear and mortification, as he proceeded to announce his startling facts.

"I—I cannot believe it," she gasped, when he paused as above; "and besides—Salome is dead."

"Salome is not dead; she saved herself from that fire," Dr. Winthrop replied. "But learning afterward, that she was supposed to have been one of the victims, she let it be so understood, since she wished to be dead to her enemies and the husband, who, she had been led to believe, had disowned her."

Madam's proud head began to droop here, but her son went on:

"She became companion to a lady named Leonard; she won her heart by her goodness and loveliness. They came abroad after a time, were in Paris at the time the cholera broke out; Miss Leonard was attacked with it

and died in the convent of the gray nuns, after having bequeathed her handsome fortune to Salome. My darling then adopted the dress of the gray nuns and resumed her old vocation of nursing. She was the means of doing an inestimable amount of good; she saved many lives. Mother, she was known as Sister Angela!"

"True! O True!" and the tone was full of agony and humiliation. "It cannot—cannot be!"

"It is every word true," Dr. Winthrop went on relentlessly. "Salome, my wife, is one of the loveliest women on earth, and you and Evelyn have much to answer for, for your treatment of her. It is no fault of yours that she was not driven to her death—that both our lives were not irretrievably ruined. What if you had succeeded in making me marry that woman's daughter—that impostor! Think of the disgrace, the misery which must have ensued! I should have lost, not only those fortunes, which you have been so determined to win at all costs, but my wife, my self-respect, and everything worth living for; you would have made a bigamist of me, and burdened me with a woman who is utterly without feeling or principle—who is false to the very core of her nature. Oh, my mother, why could you not have conquered your unworthy pride and ambition, and allowed the sweetness and nobility of that lovely girl to win you? All the wretchedness of these two long years need never have come to us. Think how beautifully Salome received and entertained you when you returned so suddenly from abroad; her conduct was simply perfect, both as a hostess and as a daughter, and she would have loved you tenderly if you had but opened your heart to her. Instead, you offered her scorn and slights. She bore all with the utmost sweetness, never showing the slightest retaliation, but denied herself in every possible way to conciliate you and Evelyn. What a contrast to these two women, to whom you have cringed and fawned, hoping to gratify your insatiable ambition. Think of what they are guilty! They have discovered Sister Angela's identity."

"What!" exclaimed Madame Winthrop, startled for

the moment out of her shame and humiliation, "do they know?"

"Yes, they found her out while you and Evelyn were away from the chateau. She was suddenly taken ill, and in trying to restore her they learned her secret. They hid her in their own rooms, waiting upon her themselves until she was able to be moved, and then, with the cunning of devils, trapped her into a mad-house in Paris, where they hoped to bury her alive, and thus enable them to carry out their purpose of marrying Mrs. Rochester's daughter to me. Do you realize what the success of such a plot would have involved? Do you realize the crimes that you have been aiding and abetting?—theft upon a wholesale scale, abduction and bigamy?"

Madame Winthrop threw out her hand with a gesture of horror at these ugly names.

"This is plain language, I know, mother," Dr. Winthrop went on, "but you deserve to have the unvarnished truth set before you, and I want you to understand that if you had succeeded in accomplishing your purpose, the very end for which you have schemed would have been frustrated; the truth must surely have been revealed eventually, and then, ah! the shame and misery of it all!"

CHAPTER XLVII.

"SALOME, YOU HAVE CONQUERED ME!"

MADAME WINTHROP shuddered as she turned her pale, drawn face upon her son.

"Truman, it seems as if I could bear no more; but I suppose you will complete my wretchedness by utterly repudiating me—you will never forgive me?" she said, in a despairing tone.

"It is not my forgiveness alone that you should seek. If my wife can forgive you, it would hardly become your son to withhold his pardon from his mother," he gravely returned, a tender light breaking over his face as he thought of the gentle spirit which Salome exhibited under her bitter persecutions.

The woman flushed hotly at his words.

Could she, with her indomitable pride, her haughty spirit, ever sue to that girl for pardon?

It seemed a humiliation to which she could never subject herself.

But she could not be the mother of such a son as Truman Winthrop without possessing some of the elements of nobility with which he had been endowed, although her nature had become warped and perverted by long-continued prosperity, selfishness, and the adulation of the world.

She had been shocked and horrified by the revelations of her son, which showed her how nearly she had come to wrecking all their lives, their fortunes, and good name. It had aroused her conscience, too, and, though she shrank with the greatest repugnance from obeying its dictates, she realized that she could never regain her self-respect, nor the affection of her boy, until she made

proper acknowledgment, and what restitution she could, for the wrong of which she had been guilty.

"What can we do?" she faltered, trying to stifle for the moment the voice within her. "Everybody believes that you are soon to marry Miss Rochester."

Dr. Winthrop's lips curled; for it seemed to him as if her first and only thought was for appearance.

"That is a matter which I believe can be easily arranged," he replied, with some coldness. "Norman and Sarah Rochester love each other. If they will agree, let their engagement be formally announced; let them even be immediately married, if he can be content to make a woman like her his wife, and the other belief will pass for a mistake, a society blunder. I do not wish to sacrifice my brother, however, to escape any scandal myself," he added, flushing. "I can bear to have the truth known rather than that his life should be ruined by an unhappy marriage. Still, if the girl really loves him, such an arrangement may result in making a better woman of her."

Madame Winthrop's heart sank. She could never bear to have the truth retailed from one end of Rome to the other.

"I must go home," she cried, rising. "I cannot remain here. Will you see Mrs. Tillinghast and make my excuses? Tell her that I have become suddenly indisposed, which is true enough, for no mortal can know the bewildered state of mind I am in."

"Yes, mother, I will make your adieus. But—is there no other message that you would like me to deliver?" Dr. Winthrop inquired, searching her face wistfully.

She understood him; he wanted to take an olive-branch of peace from her to his wife. But her proud heart could not yield in a moment.

"No—not to-night—I cannot think; I am bewildered—dazed—I must go home. When shall I see you again?" she continued, with nervous incoherence.

"We are at the Quirinal," the young physician answered coldly. "Any message for us can be left there at the office, or we can be found there during the next few weeks."

Madam almost groaned aloud at this significant response. She saw that he—her favorite son—would never be at peace with her until she was willing to be reconciled to his wife; that henceforth they would be as strangers unless she humbled herself to the girl whom she had so deeply injured.

Could she yield?

Just at that moment the sound of voices reached them, and glancing up, they saw Fred Tillinghast, with Salome upon his arm, entering the conservatory.

The light from the chandelier fell strongly upon the fair wife as she crossed the threshold, and truly she was a vision of loveliness to attract the coldest, the most obdurate heart.

She looked brighter and happier than madam had ever seen her, and far more beautiful. Her form had developed more perfectly, her cheeks had filled out round and full, her eyes flashed with the fire of health, her every look and gesture betrayed the hope and happiness that filled her heart, while her elegant costume served to enhance her beauty, and was suggestive of the exquisite taste of its wearer.

Dr. Winthrop's face was a study as he caught sight of her, and it told his mother that all his pride, his hopes, his happiness, were centred in her.

"My wife—my darling! Is she not lovely?" he breathed. "Surely, mother, you cannot steel your heart against her! Let me take you to her."

"No—no; not now—I must go home—I want to get away by myself," she faltered, and turning quickly, she walked tremblingly toward the opposite entrance to the conservatory, while Dr. Winthrop, with a sigh of regret over her obstinate pride, made his way to Salome's side.

Just as Madame Winthrop reached the door she encountered Evelyn who had been searching for her.

She was very pale and excessively agitated.

"Mamma!" she cried breathlessly; "the strangest thing in the world has happened! Salome is here in this house! I have seen her—she is with Fred Tillinghast. She was not killed in that fire after all, and she is the

loveliest woman here, not to mention that she has on her person a fortune in diamonds and rich lace."

"Hush, Evelyn, and come with me," Madame Winthrop said, in a hollow tone, as she took her arm and leaned heavily on it, and the girl knew at once that something dreadful had happened.

They left the house at once, and returned directly to their own apartments, whither they found that the Rochesters had already preceded them.

Then there ensued a scene between those four women which beggars description. Scorn, contempt and condemnation on the part of Madame Winthrop; anger, defiance, and the bitterness of defeat, on the part of Mrs. Rochester.

Sarah Rochester was the most crushed and humiliated of them all, and her shame and despair were like the mighty rush of pent-up waters that had burst all barriers and swept everything before them.

She denounced them all, herself no less than the others, but she fiercely accused her mother of having ruined her life, her character, her soul, by the false and heartless way in which she had reared and educated her; by making wealth and selfish pleasure the main object of existence, and hesitating at no means, right or wrong, to attain her ends. For a time she was like one bereft of reason, and poured forth a torrent of fiery, passionate words that made her listeners shiver and cower before her. Then, exhausted with her passion, she sank in a heap upon the floor, weeping and sobbing in the utter abandonment of grief and shame.

Into the midst of this scene Norman Winthrop suddenly came, pale and stern, but with a resolute purpose written upon his face.

He went directly to the side of the conscience-smitten girl and lifted her up.

"I have heard all," he said, with white lips. "I know the whole shameful story—all the wrong, all the sin and wretched scheming, and the scandal which must follow its revelation. You are all a set of proud, ambitious, and false-hearted women; you two," turning fiercely upon

Madame Winthrop and Mrs. Rochester, "are a fine pair of mothers! It is no wonder that you make heartless coquettes of your daughters, and ruin the lives of your sons. You have overreached yourselves, however, at last, and must reap the reward of your devilish schemes, unless—— Sarah, there is no other way out of it; you know that I love you; will you marry me?"

The sound of her real name from his lips somewhat calmed the passion-wrought girl, and she lifted her white, despairing face to his, with a look of incredulous astonishment.

"Oh, I am not fit to be the wife of any man," she said, with a bitter sob, yet her fingers closed almost convulsively over his sustaining hand, and the act sent a throb of joy to the heart of the young man, for it assured him that she really loved him in spite of all.

"We will not inquire too closely into the fitness of character upon either side," he returned, with some bitterness. "I only ask—will you give yourself to me—will you be my wife?"

And with a burst of genuine sorrow, and a dawning repentance, the girl dropped her head upon his breast, murmuring:

"Oh, forgive me, forgive me, and I will try to be a better woman."

"We will both try for better things," he returned; then he added, with a sigh of relief, "and our first duty will be to save my brother the shame and annoyance of a wretched scandal; we owe him that much at least."

The others stole away and left them alone, Madame Winthrop reflecting with some comfort, in spite of her own smarting conscience, that matters would now be comfortably adjusted, and they would all escape being made disagreeably conspicuous in society.

Evelyn's haughty spirit had never received so severe a shock before, but she was still the same selfish girl, and she wondered with some trepidation if True would deprive her of the handsome sum with which he had hitherto supplemented her regular income.

"They are all a set of sickly, sentimental fools!" was

Mrs. Rochester's angry verdict as she shut herself into her own room, no less wretched, but more defiant than the others. "I always hated that girl, and now I hate her a hundred-fold. I never dreamed that she could triumph over me thus—I thought she was so safely caged in that mad-house—that treacherous doctor and I will have a serious reckoning yet—I wonder how she got out? She has outwitted me, but I shall at least have the income of the fifty thousand, and I can manage to make myself comfortable on that."

But alas! she reasoned foolishly, like the rich man in the parable, and morning found her a helpless paralytic! The shock and excitement of her defeat had been too much for her system, and her days were numbered.

She lived a week, but could neither speak nor move during that time, and it was agony to those who watched beside her, to see her follow them with remorseful appealing eyes, which betrayed something of the mental suffering she experienced. Madame Winthrop believed that the look would follow her to her grave.

It was a relief to them all when at last she ceased to breathe, and the white lids drooped and shut out forever that expression of remorse and despair.

Throughout this time of trial and sorrow, Salome had proved herself to be truly a friend in need. She put aside her personal feeling, took her place at the bedside of the sufferer, and assumed the burden of care which no one else seemed equal to, and was as tender and thoughtful for her comfort as the fondest daughter could have been.

She planned everything when the end came, saw that all due respect was paid to her father's widow, and, after she had been laid away in a quiet spot outside the city, kindly asked Sarah if she could be of any assistance to her in her arrangements for the future.

The girl's proud spirit seemed to be utterly subdued by her recent trials, while the new resolves and hopes which had begun to take root in her heart were already showing signs of bearing good fruit in the future.

She broke down entirely at Salome's considerate offer.

"I deserve nothing from you, Sadie," she sobbed;

"nothing but your hatred and contempt, for I have never been anything but your enemy. I only wonder how you could be so kind to mamma and so helpful to me at this dreadful time. You know, I suppose," she went on, flushing, "that I am going to marry Norman Winthrop; I love him and—he loves me, even though he knows all. But I will never annoy you with my presence; we will go to live in some place where you and I need never meet. I am sorry and ashamed for—everything. I know that expresses very little, but, truly, to me it means a great deal."

This confession occurred just after their return from the burial of Mrs. Rochester, and Salome was too weary and exhausted to say much to the remorseful girl; besides, it had come upon her so unexpectedly that she scarcely knew how to answer her.

"Let us not talk any more of this now," she said, "for you are worn out with grief and watching; but, Sarah, you know that I am not vindictive. Now, let me help you to bed, and when you are rested, I will come to see you again."

Sarah Rochester knew that she was forgiven for all the wrong of the past by those few kind words, and for the first time in her life she wondered how she could have cherished a feeling of enmity toward one who was so thoroughly good and noble.

During this season of trouble, Salome had, of course, been obliged to come in contact with Madame Winthrop and Evelyn, but she met them with quiet courtesy, and during all their intercourse, was as respectful as if she had entertained only the highest esteem for them. They were her husband's mother and sister, and for his sake she was careful to show them all due regard.

They were astonished at her. They knew, of course, that as Sister Angela she had accomplished almost miracles for them when she was at the chateau; but it had not seemed so wonderful then. They had looked up to her, relied upon her, and trusted in her, for such results had seemed only in accordance with her character as a nurse and sister of mercy. But now, as she moved so

gently and deftly about the sick-room in all her delicate beauty, doing just the right thing at the right moment, and never sparing herself for one who had wronged and ill-used her for long years, they marvelled not only at her efficiency but at her loveliness of character and at her dignity of bearing under such trying circumstances.

"I have lived in the world for fifty-five years," Madame Winthrop said to herself one day, as she watched Salome, while, with exceeding gentleness, she bathed the hot face and hands of the sufferer and tried in other ways to make her more comfortable, "and I have never been the womanly woman that she is to-day in her youth."

It was not a pleasant reflection, but it helped on the good work—the better impulses and purposes that were beginning to take root in her heart.

A week after Mrs. Rochester's burial, Norman Winthrop sought Sarah and begged for an immediate marriage.

"It is the only thing for us to do," he urged. "You are alone in the world, and need me to take care of you, while I need you to give me an object in life; come, Sarah, let us begin together a new life, and see if we two cannot manage to shed some lustre upon the name of Winthrop before we die."

She yielded to his pleadings, and a few days later there was a quiet wedding in their pretty drawing-room, where, in the presence of only the family and the Tillinghasts, they plighted their vows with more of conscious responsibility and solemnity than either had ever experienced before.

When the Americans then in Rome read the announcement of the marriage in the next morning's papers, it was very generally remarked that "it was strange everybody had made such a mistake as to suppose that Dr. Winthrop was to marry Miss Rochester," and nothing more was said about the matter.

The young couple had planned to leave immediately for New York, where Norman intended to begin the practice of law, and just before their departure Salome drew the bride quietly one side, as if for the purpose of a private leave-taking.

The new Mrs. Winthrop was visibly agitated, and looking wistfully in her companion's face, said:

"Salome, you have been very good to me, and, believe me, it is hard for me to say good-by. Once more let me tell you that I am sorry——"

"Hush; this is your wedding-day," Salome said, smiling, and interrupting her speech. "I believe you are going to be very happy in your new life—I hope so, at any rate, and let this be the seal of my pardon."

She slipped a small package into her hands as she spoke, adding, hurriedly, as she turned away:

"Do not open it until you get home."

Three weeks later, Sarah Winthrop broke the seal of that package, as she sat with her husband in their room in the Hoffman House, New York, and found within it a deed of gift to herself of fifty thousand dollars—the interest only of which was to have fallen to her mother upon the consummation of the Rochester-Hamilton marriage.

She threw herself into her husband's arms weeping passionately.

"Norman! Norman!" she cried, "that girl is an angel, and my whole life shall be spent in trying to be like her."

Three months passed, and then Dr. Winthrop and his party arrived in New York.

Madame Winthrop had not been well, and they had been obliged to delay their return on her account, while her son was not a little anxious regarding the state she was in.

There had been a terrible struggle going on in the proud woman's heart ever since the evening of Mrs. Tillinghast's reception in Rome, and it was slowly but surely undermining her health.

She was continually conscious of the great wrong that she had done her son's wife; she knew that she ought to acknowledge it, and yet her almost indomitable will would not yield to what her conscience told her was a solemn duty.

Salome knew how she was suffering, both mentally and

physically, and she sincerely pitied her, and longed to be at peace with her; yet she did not really know how to help her, or how she would receive any attempt at a reconciliation on her part.

The vessel on which they returned steamed into the harbor of New York just as the sun was setting, one lovely afternoon. Madame was reclining in her steamer-chair, where she had sat most of the day, somewhat remote from every one else, as she supposed, for of late she had seemed to shun all society, and they had humored her whim.

But she had not heard or noticed the slight, graceful figure that had stolen upon her and now stood just behind her chair, regarding her with an expression of sorrowful yearning.

The unhappy woman uttered a deep sigh as her heavy eyes swept the gorgeous sky and then rested upon the spires and chimneys of the great city which they were approaching.

"Home—home at last! I wonder if I shall ever be happy again?" she muttered gloomily.

"It will be pleasant to be at home again, will it not?" said a low, musical voice in her ear. "And—mother—will you not let me, from this time forth, be a daughter to you in every sense of the word?"

Madame Winthrop started, and looked up into the tender, beautiful face bending over her, an expression of wonder in her eyes, which gradually filled with tears.

"Salome!" she said tremulously; "surely you were rightly named, for your nature is—peace! The Word of God is true; it says, 'a little child shall lead them.' You have led me where I would not voluntarily go, but I believe, I hope, the way will end in 'green pastures, and beside still waters.' My daughter, you have conquered me."

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